



# Wandsworth Libraries

*Books  
Information  
Records  
Tapes  
and much more*

 **Wandsworth**

L.150 (11.87.)

No book can be issued unless the reader's ticket is presented or a book returned. No book can be exchanged on the day on which it was issued.

Changes of address of readers or of their sponsors must be notified within one week of such change.

Readers leaving the Borough or ceasing to use the Libraries are required to return their tickets to the Librarian, otherwise they will be held responsible for all liabilities incurred.

Readers are

keep the books clean, to  
the leaves, or making  
upon them. They must  
injury done to the books  
they will be held  
ne.

(2778/51) H & S Ltd.

Metropolitan Borough of Wandsworth.

WEST HILL PUBLIC LIBRARY, WANDSWORTH,  
LONDON, S.W.18.

**METROPOLITAN SPECIAL COLLECTION**  
**METROPOLITAN JOINT FICTION RESERVE**

THIS BOOK SHOULD BE RETURNED ON OR BEFORE THE DATE  
STAMPED BELOW.

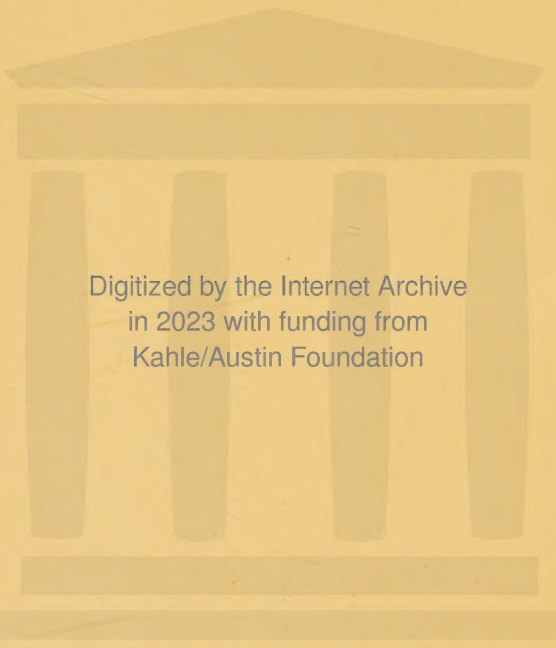
~~Shonemitchell~~

~~16.7.63~~

~~21. JUL 95~~

~~11 August 95~~





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2023 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation



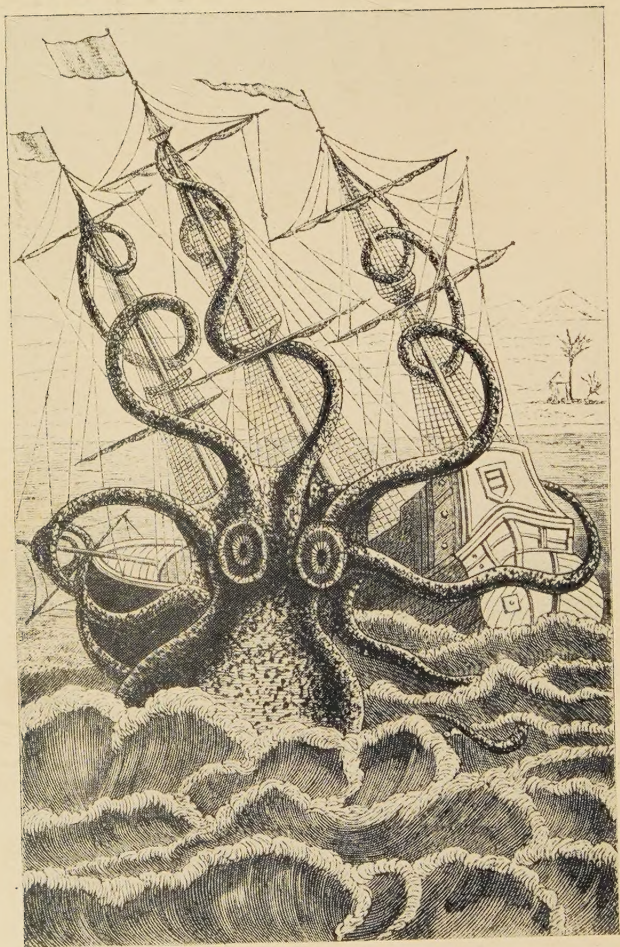
STRANGE SEA MYSTERIES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

FOR SATAN'S SAKE  
THE UNKNOWN DEPTHS  
THE SORCERY CLUB  
THE HAUNTED MAN  
THE IRISH ABROAD  
GHOSTS HELPFUL AND HARMFUL  
GHOSTLAND







FACSIMILE OF DE MONTFORT'S "POULPE COLOSSAL"

# STRANGE SEA MYSTERIES

BY

ELLIOTT O'DONNELL

LONDON

JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD LIMITED

910.4  
M 5414

1890	RECORD
	No.
382	470

*First Published in 1926*

ALLOCATION EK	CLASS 910 4	ACC. No. 197603
STOCK CARD	SHEAF NUMBER	STAMP
SAT. CARD	SHEAF TYPE	LABEL
BOOK-BARD	CHECKED	DATE OF ISSUE
PRESS-MARK		BINDING No.

**WITHDRAWN**

AUG 1950

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES.



## PREFACE

IN compiling this volume of unpleasant happenings connected with the sea great care has been taken to select those only that are authentic.

*July 1, 1926.*



# CONTENTS

## PART I

### SHIPS THAT HAVE DISAPPEARED

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE "PRESIDENT" . . . . .	1
II.	THE "CITY OF GLASGOW" . . . . .	12
III.	THE "LADY NUGENT" . . . . .	16
IV.	THE "PACIFIC" . . . . .	20
V.	THE "CITY OF BOSTON" . . . . .	24
VI.	H.M.S. "ATALANTA" . . . . .	30
VII.	H.M.S. "WASP" . . . . .	40

## PART II

### CREWS THAT HAVE DISAPPEARED

VIII.	THE CASE OF THE "JAMES CHESTER" . . . . .	47
IX.	THE "MARIE CELESTE" . . . . .	53
X.	THE "HERMANIA" . . . . .	60
XI.	THE MAN IN THE BUNK . . . . .	63

## PART III

### STRANGE DEEDS ON BOARD SHIP

XII.	THE MASSACRE ON BOARD THE "E. A. JOHNSON" . . . . .	71
XIII.	A BEACHY HEAD PROBLEM . . . . .	80
XIV.	JUMBO AND BOTTLE-OF-BEER . . . . .	83
XV.	A CHINESE PUZZLE . . . . .	94
XVI.	THE SHIP OF STRANGE SMELLS . . . . .	99
XVII.	THE STOWAWAY . . . . .	101
XVIII.	WAS THERE A WOMAN IN THE CASE? . . . . .	105
XIX.	THE MURDER ON THE "GLOBE" . . . . .	107
XX.	BURIED ALIVE . . . . .	113
XXI.	THE MAN IN THE HAMPER . . . . .	117



## PART IV

## FOUND BY THE SEA

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXII.	THE GREAT RAMSGATE MYSTERY . . . . .	123
XXIII.	A SUNDERLAND TRAGEDY . . . . .	127
XXIV.	A PORTUGUESE MYSTERY . . . . .	131
XXV.	FOUND IN MARSEILLES HARBOUR . . . . .	134
XXVI.	FOUND IN THE DOCKS AT SHADWELL . . . . .	138
XXVII.	A ROTHERHITHE PUZZLE . . . . .	141
XXVIII.	THE CORPSE BOX OF HELL GATE . . . . .	144
XXIX.	FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW . . . . .	156

## PART V

## UNLUCKY AND ILL-OMENED SHIPS

XXX.	THE STRANGE CASE OF THE "USK" . . . . .	161
XXXI.	THE FIGUREHEAD ON THE MAST . . . . .	164
XXXII.	THE ILL-OMENED "SQUANDO" . . . . .	166

## PART VI

## SOME STRANGE COLLISIONS AT SEA

XXXIII.	THE RUNNING DOWN OF THE "STRATHOLYDE" . . . . .	171
XXIV.	THE COVERED FIGUREHEAD . . . . .	182

## PART VII

## MONSTERS OF THE DEEP

XXXV.	THE SEA SERPENT . . . . .	193
XXXVI.	CEPHALOPODA . . . . .	235
XXXVII.	GIANT CONGERS, ETC. . . . .	248

## PART VIII

## SOME OTHER DANGERS OF THE DEEP

XXXVIII.	WHIRLPOOLS . . . . .	259
XXXIX.	WATERSPOUTS . . . . .	262
XL.	FATAL CAVES . . . . .	264
XLI.	THE SARGASSO SEA . . . . .	267
	SUMMARY . . . . .	272

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FACSIMILE OF DE MONTFORT'S "POULPE COLOSSAL"	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
THE MISSING SCREW-STEAMER "CITY OF BOSTON"	24
THE MISSING TRAINING-SHIP "ATALANTA"	30
THE COLLISION IN DOVER BAY	174
THE "NORTHFLEET" AT GRAVESEND	182
THE SEA SERPENT WHEN FIRST SEEN FROM H.M.S. "DÆDALUS"	210
SUPPOSED APPEARANCE OF THE GREAT SEA SERPENT	212
RE-APPEARANCE OF THE GREAT SEA SERPENT	218
THE SEA SERPENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN	220
THE SEA SERPENT	222
THE SEA SERPENT SEIZES A WHALE	224
ANOTHER MARINE MONSTER	226
GIANT CALAMARY AFLOAT	240



PART I

SHIPS THAT HAVE DISAPPEARED



# STRANGE SEA MYSTERIES

## I

### THE "PRESIDENT"

**N**O tragedy of the sea, in the 'forties of the last century, occasioned a greater sensation or made a more painful impression on both sides of the Atlantic than did the complete and mysterious disappearance of the *President*. Described by a contemporary writer as a magnificent steamship belonging to the Royal Mail Packet Service, the *President* left New York for Liverpool on March 11, 1841. She had on board her 121 persons including 27 passengers and her Captain, a highly skilled and experienced seaman named Roberts. Among the passengers \* were Lord Fitzroy Lennox, son of the Duke of Richmond, and Tyrone Power, a well-known London actor.

Despite the fact that there was a tremendous gale in the Atlantic on the 12th and 13th of March, no anxiety seems to have been felt concerning the ship, probably for the simple reason that she was

\* For full list see *Times*, April 7, 1841.



deemed to be one of the finest in the service, until March 31, when an announcement appeared in the *Times* to the effect that the steamships *President* and *Britannia* were considerably overdue at Liverpool, and that they had, in fact, been longer on their respective voyages than any other Royal Mail Steamers had ever been before. No disaster was hinted at, it was merely suggested that the two ships had been delayed by the weather. However, brief, and one might almost say casual, as this notice regarding the *President* was, it immediately set the public mind thinking, and from that day onward, for many weeks, the possible fate of the vessel furnished a general and hourly topic of conversation. Friends and even strangers, meeting by chance in the street or elsewhere, would ask each other excitedly, "What about the *President*? What can have happened to her?" while the daily papers were quickly bought up and their columns eagerly searched for the latest tidings of her. And yet, day after day, the report was the same, "The *President* has not yet arrived." A rumour that the *Orpheus*,\* which left New York two days after the *President*, had caught her up and accompanied her was dispelled, when the former vessel arrived at Liverpool on April 2, after a quick journey, and declared she had never even seen her. Some comfort, however, was derived from the suggestion made by the Captain of the *Orpheus*, that very possibly the *President* had been disabled by the gale of the 12th and 13th, and was running south or working to the east under canvas.

On the day the *Orpheus* arrived another steam

\* *Times*, April 9, 1841.

packet, the *Virginia*,\* reached Liverpool. She, too, had come from New York and, in spite of the weather on the 17th, 18th and 19th, had been little more than fifteen days on the way. In fine weather the crossing might have been accomplished in twelve and a half days, but to do it in fifteen days, in bad weather, was generally regarded, at that date, as good. Like the *Orpheus*, the *Virginia* could give no news of the *President*, but her allusion to large masses of ice on the track was so significant that seafaring men with experience of the Atlantic looked at one another in dismay. And this sensation was quickly followed by another, when it became known that the other missing ship, the *Britannia*, had arrived in port, but without any intelligence whatever of the *President*.

On April 7 the *Times* published a full list of the *President's* passengers, and many of those who read it felt that they were reading the names on a tomb; yet, despite the impression thus created, no suggestion of a calamity was made by the authorities, but rather the reverse. In the *Liverpool Albion* it was said:

"Nothing whatever has been heard of the *President* steamer. If she has run to southward, and made for the Western Isles for the purpose of replenishing her coal, she is not yet due. The Liverpool steamship (*i.e.* the *President*) when, in the winter of 1839,\* compelled to run to the same islands, to replenish her coals, took 27 days on the passage from New York to Liverpool. Prevalent opinion is that she must have run to the Western

\* *Times*, April 7, 1841.

Isles, and that she may be expected to arrive in a few days. Indeed, there was yesterday a rumour afloat that the *Lynx* had seen a steamer making for Fayal."

This, of course, was fairly cheerful news and public opinion became divided. While some people, including a large percentage of the rank and file of seafaring men, thought the *President* had foundered, others, among whom were many recognized naval experts, seemed convinced it was simply a question of delay, and that the *President* was, if not absolutely sound, at any rate quite safe. Indeed, in the early hours of the morning of April 13, tremendous excitement was caused in Birmingham by a report \* that a special train had just arrived from Liverpool announcing that the *President* had reached that port in a very shattered condition. The *Times* newspaper at once inquired into the matter and speedily published a denial. Their representative, on reaching Birmingham, found that there was no truth whatsoever in the rumour.

And this was the beginning of a long series of bitter disappointments, in some cases the result of mere gossip, but in others the outcome of cruel and deliberate hoaxing.

Lloyd's, for example, were informed that Mrs. Roberts, wife of the Captain of the *President*, had received a letter from her husband, stating that the *President*, having sustained damage to her rudder and engines, had put into Madeira for repairs, and that she would soon be on her way again to England.

\* *Times*, April 14, 1841.

Lloyd's at once despatched a messenger to inquire if this were true, and later they were able to state authoritatively that Mrs. Roberts had never received any such communication at all.

A letter, containing a similar statement regarding the safety of the *President*, was actually received about this time by the relative of a gentleman known to have been a passenger on board the missing vessel, but the matter was not taken up, and the news, on what grounds we are not told, was declared to be false. Another recipient of information testifying to the safety of the *President* was Mrs Power, wife of the actor. She received three letters ; two of them purporting to come from the wife of a leading merchant in Liverpool and the third, presumably written in Madeira, from Tyrone Power himself. "The *President* has been seen off Madeira," was the unequivocal announcement contained in the first of them, whilst in the second was written :

"Thank God, I can state positively and certainly the *President* is safe in Madeira. Mrs. Roberts (wife of the Captain) has received a letter containing that information. This is certain and may be relied on."

But, apparently, it was not certain ; no corroborative evidence was forthcoming, and as in the second letter the reference to Mrs. Roberts was demonstrably untrue, the news, naturally perhaps, was discounted *in toto* and, consequently, turned down. Regarding the letter purporting to be written by Mr. Power himself, certain of Mrs. Power's friends, including Mr. Webster of the Haymarket Theatre, considered it a forgery, and notwithstanding the almost insanely meaningless

want of heart on the part of the writer that such an opinion implied, they, apparently, did not give it a second thought.

"Power," Mr. Webster said, "is a man of such energy that whenever he is heard of, he will be the bearer of his own news. He wouldn't let a ship depart without him."

Mrs. Power apparently took this view too, and agreed with Mr. Webster that her husband had not sent the epistle. She did, however, get one genuine letter, that for a time at least cheered her. It was from Captain Fayrer, late commander of the *President*, and the following is an extract from it : \*

"There is no fear of the safety of the *President*," he wrote, "no doubt something has happened to the rudder or engines, but I will stake my reputation on the stability of the ship. I have no doubt she has gone to Bermuda owing to the wind being contrary for New York, and still worse for Halifax. It is not probable she would be seen until her arrival at Bermuda, as she would be out of the track of homeward bound ships."

This was, indeed, a hopeful view, and coming from a man who had had experience of the *President*, having sailed in her in all winds and weathers, and who knew her intimately, it was highly appreciated and welcomed. One might have thought that in writing thus, Captain Fayrer was merely trying to comfort the disconsolate wife, but for the fact that this opinion regarding the safety of the ship was shared by many other experienced seamen, who

\* *Vide Times*, April 14, 1841.



absolutely refused to abandon hope, and persistently clung to the belief that the *President* was altogether too sound a vessel to have gone to pieces and sunk like a mere cockleshell in the storm of the 13th and 14th instant.

The person who next to Mrs. Power herself took the greatest interest in the letters she received was the Duke of Richmond. He sent to her at once to get confirmation of the news, and his grief and disappointment on being, subsequently, told "there is nothing in it" was bitter in the extreme. It was while these letters were still being discussed with no little heat that another sensation, equally electrical in its effect, was sprung on the public from Liverpool.\*

On the morning of April 15 some Irish vessels brought the news that a large steamship was standing off and on, waiting for water, to enter the Victoria Channel. Owing to a thick haze she could not be seen very clearly, but from what could be seen of her there was little doubt that she was the *President*.

This was something like news, and directly the information was received the flag of the consignee was hoisted at the signal station and messengers were sent off post haste to tell the good tidings to all who were chiefly concerned. That Queen Victoria took a special interest in the fate of the missing vessel was well known and the *Times* of April 16, 1841, referring to the above incident of news received, published the following :

"Her Majesty upon leaving Buckingham Palace for Windsor Castle left strict commands that immediately upon news of the safety of the *President*

\* *Times*, April 15, 1841.



reaching London, a special messenger should be despatched with the intelligence, and it having been stated in London on Tuesday that some information had been received respecting this vessel which left no doubt it had been heard of, and was in safety, Mr. Rogers, a Queen's messenger, arrived express at Windsor from Town, shortly after 8 o'clock that evening, and Her Majesty immediately after his arrival had intelligence communicated to her through the Lord Chamberlain, when the Queen and Prince Albert expressed highest satisfaction at the gratifying communication."

But, alas, as the *Times* subsequently proclaimed, the news once again proved unreliable. When the fog at sea cleared, the steamer in question was seen to be the *Oriental* from Alexandria to Falmouth. There was absolutely no news of the unfortunate *President*.

Even now, however, optimism was by no means dead, and hope again reached a high level, when Captain Roberts' brother-in-law, who resided in London, received a letter bearing a Bristol post-mark stating that a vessel had just put into Waterford with the news that the *President* had left the Bermudas and was well on her way to Liverpool. Indeed, so convinced was the recipient of this letter that it was genuine, and that the statements contained in it were true, that he told every one he met the *President* was safe, and the news soon spread all over the city. Then, once again, came disillusion.

The harbour authorities at Waterford, on being communicated with, announced that no such ship as the one described had been to that port, and that no fresh news regarding the missing ship had been

received by them. After this, though the few were still hopeful, the many shook their heads, and the Press, taking up the cue for the first time, ventured to express the opinion that the *President* had foundered off the coast of Newfoundland in the severe gale of the 12th and 13th of March. And, as if to substantiate this view, a Cork newspaper stated, as a fact, that a bottle had been picked up at sea containing a scrap of paper, upon which apparently had been written in haste, "The *President* is sinking. God help us all. Tyrone Power." Whether this fresh incident was the mere invention of some badly balanced mind, unable to resist the opportunity of making a dramatic sensation no matter at what cost, or whether in part or *in toto* it was a Press stunt, is a question that I cannot answer. Apparently there is no allusion to this discovery in any of the English papers, and therefore one can safely assume that in this country, at least, the matter was not treated seriously. But even if Power did write the message, it throws little light on the situation. It merely states that the *President* was foundering, but it does not say why or where.

On May 24 a spark of hope was once again revived by a Press report, that a Portuguese ship had passed a large steamer like the *President* with its machinery disabled, somewhere in the Atlantic. But of this, also, nothing further came, and the public at length came to the conclusion that the *President* really was lost with every one on board.

The actual cause of her loss will, one presumes, always remain a mystery. Some people have suggested faulty construction, but since no such

comment seems to have been made by responsible or qualified people, prior to her loss, I think one may regard the theory that a catastrophe was brought about through a constructional defect as untenable.

With regard to the suggestion that an ice floe or iceberg was responsible for the tragedy, there certainly was much ice about ; there generally is in the Atlantic at this season of the year. Hence, that she did get hopelessly entangled in an ice floe and damaged to such an extent that she eventually sank ; or, that a mass of ice from a berg fell on her and sent her, stone fashion, to the bottom ; or, again, like the *Titanic*, that she had her sides ripped out by the semi-submerged, jagged surface of a berg is quite possible. But, although possible, neither of these alternatives would appear to be probable, if we assume that those on watch at the time were even moderately experienced and alert ; and that they were even more than moderately experienced, I think we may assume, since there was abundant evidence to show that the Captain and officers of the vessel were highly qualified, and perhaps even exceptionally highly qualified. In more than one case of catastrophe at sea in more recent years, drink on the part of those in charge has been hinted at, but there would appear to be no justification for suggesting such a possibility here, at least I have not been able to discover even the barest mootings of such a thing in the literature of those times.

Then, again, there is the question of wreckage. Would it have been possible for a ship, mainly, at all events, constructed of wood, to have gone down and to have left nothing whatever, neither boat,

life-belt, spar, nor piece of ship's furniture behind her? Other vessels invariably leave some wreckage on the surface, so why did not the *President*? And with regard to the theory that the storm accounted for the disappearance of the *President*, why should that same storm have proved practically harmless in the case of small vessels, for there were many small vessels doing the same passage as the *President*, and all of them had come safely into port, and have sent to the bottom one of the largest and best built ships of the day? Captain Fayrer, it must be remembered, as well as other naval experts, scouted the idea of the *President* having foundered in the gale; they were convinced she was still somewhere afloat, and who more capable of judging than they? But if the *President* did not go down in that storm, or sink to the bottom through contact with an ice floe or iceberg, what did become of her? Ah, that is a conundrum; but I would like to point out that there are possible alternatives.

Is it not possible, for instance, that there might have been more than a little truth in the many rumours that she was seen, in a disabled state, steaming away down south towards the West Indies or Western Isles? Those were hard times, when seamen were not treated as seamen now are, when, in fact, there was much cruelty and oppression, and sometimes, in consequence, wholesale and dreadful reprisals. Bearing this in mind, then, might not the *President* have been actually taken away, down south by the usurpers of authority, to be plundered and finally destroyed—destroyed in such a manner as to leave no possible tell-tale trace behind?

## II

### THE "CITY OF GLASGOW"

**A**LTHOUGH to some extent the disappearance of this ship was of an even more mysterious nature than that of the *President*, the public took far less interest in her case. There were various reasons for this anomaly, one being that the tragedy occurred at a time when happenings in the east of Europe and Asia were beginning to attract general attention, and another that there was no one on board the *City of Glasgow* of the same note as Lord Fitzroy Lennox and Tyrone Power. Wherever there are such personalities there is glamour, and in the case of the *City of Glasgow* glamour was entirely lacking. Built on the Clyde in 1850,\* she was of 1087 tons burden, with engines of 350 horse-power, working a screw propeller. A pigmy in these days, as regards size and strength, she was at the date referred to considered a leviathan, and, needless to say, generally deemed a thoroughly sound and seaworthy vessel. She was commanded by Captain Morrison, who had had many years' experience in the Atlantic, and was justifiably considered a very capable and reliable seaman.

\* *Vide Annual Register*, May, 1854.



She left Liverpool on March 1, 1854, having on board her 111 cabin and saloon passengers, 293 steerage passengers, and 76 crew, making in all a total of 480.

As exceptionally fine weather was experienced immediately subsequent to her leaving port, and she was reputed to be capable of weathering the most severe winds and storms, no one worried about her, and it was not until she was several days overdue, and ships that had sailed at a later date had arrived at Philadelphia, one after the other, without having seen any sign of her, that anxiety on her behalf became at all manifest. People then began to talk, and when the *City of Manchester*, sister ship to the *City of Glasgow*, which had left Philadelphia the day the latter sailed from Liverpool, reached the Mersey by the same route, and reported enormous masses of ice, they not only talked but shook their heads ominously. And this was not all. A little later, the *Westmoreland*, which had left Liverpool a few days prior to the *City of Glasgow*, and was consequently longer overdue, arrived in port in America with the startling announcement that she had been embedded in ice floes for five days. She had, she stated, actually seen icebergs between two and three hundred feet high; and she calculated there was a solid mass of ice, almost compact, at least 347 miles long. The report primarily spread by the *City of Manchester* being thus confirmed, many people jumped to the conclusion that the *City of Glasgow* had come into collision with this ice field and had sunk. But jumping to this conclusion was, in the opinion of many, merely going off at a tangent. If the *Westmoreland* and other vessels possessing, perhaps, fewer advantages



with regard to strength, and speed, and expert seamanship had managed to avoid the danger, why, they argued, should not the *City of Glasgow* have avoided it ? It was thought in America that she might, through some very slight collision with the ice, have got her propeller damaged, and, consequently, have stood away for the West India Islands or elsewhere to repair, but it was never surmised for one instant that a serious collision had occurred, resulting in her total destruction.

That was entirely a British conjecture, and a conjecture, moreover, that could only presuppose either gross carelessness or inexperience, not merely on the part of those on duty on the deck at the time, but on the part of the Captain, who cannot have failed to be aware of any close proximity to ice, since it is invariably accompanied by a sudden and marked fall in the temperature ; and the Captain, be it said, as well as the ship's officers were all highly qualified for their jobs.

Yet, if ice did not account for the disappearance of the *City of Glasgow*, what did ? From the time she left port on her last journey, till she was due to arrive, quite moderately good weather was experienced ; and, in any case, certain it is that no storm was encountered of such a magnitude as to warrant the foundering of a vessel so strongly built and well equipped.

Yet she vanished, and that she met her fate of complete annihilation soon after she left home seems to be fairly evident, for after she left Liverpool, that first day of March, she was never seen by any other ship again.

Among the many rumours that speedily got into

circulation concerning her was one\* to the effect that she had foundered in mid ocean, but that the crew and passengers were saved and had been conveyed to the Coast of Africa. Inquiry, apparently, made it clear that this report had no foundation in fact, but, at the same time, there were, I believe, people who believed that it might well have contained some substratum of truth, since rumour, as a rule, does not arise out of nothing, and with regard to this one, supposing the *City of Glasgow* had foundered and her passengers had been conveyed to the Coast of Africa, for various and obvious reasons it might have been very difficult to trace them. On the other hand, however, this rumour might not have had any truth in it at all. What then did happen to the *City of Glasgow*?

Could a derelict, one of those ocean pests that are ever a source of danger, have suddenly crossed her path—I know from experience how difficult it is to sight them—so that she collided with it? That, of course, is a possibility, but, as in the case of every other suggested solution, there is in it merely a possibility and nothing more.

The destroying factor may have been an ice floe, an iceberg, a derelict, or—I repeat, in the total absence of data, we can only surmise—even a perfectly sound and well-manned vessel, that having accidentally crashed into the *City of Glasgow* and dealt her a death blow instantly sheered off and slunk away, like the criminal she was, to avoid delay or unpleasant consequences. There have been such cases.†

\* *Vide, Illustrated London News*, April 29, 1854.

† For example, the running down of the *Northfleet* by an unknown vessel in January, 1873.

### III

## THE "LADY NUGENT"

NOT many months after the *City of Glasgow* disappeared another ship disappeared also. This time, however, the disappearance did not occur in the terrible Atlantic but in distant Indian waters.

On May 10, 1854, the *Lady Nugent* sailed from Madras for Rangoon. She had been chartered in the spring of the year \* as a troopship for the conveyance of reinforcements to the British forces at Rangoon, and, in addition to her commander, Captain G. C. Bannerman, and her three officers and thirty seamen, she had on board her 350 rank and file of the 25th Regiment of Madras Light Infantry, 7 native officers, 20 women and children, together with a number of staff officers, including Lieut.-Col. Johnstone, Lieut. and Adjutant Daly, Lieut. and Quarter-Master King, Lieut. Bamford, and Assistant-Surgeon Simpson. She was of nearly 700 tons burden and was classed in Lloyd's Register as A1 for three years. Indeed, she was generally regarded in India as a thoroughly taut craft, well able to hold her own against wind, and wave, and storm.

\* *Vide Annual Register*, September 1, 1854.

When she left, it was with the prophecy that she would soon be anchoring at her destination, and it was doubtful if a single soul who watched her depart that brilliant May morning gave even a passing thought to the possibility of misfortune. Did any one of them possess the so-called intuitive faculty, it is pretty certain it was absolutely dormant on that occasion, for not a soul is known to have uttered a word of warning, nor to have foreseen the slightest sign of impending disaster. Yet the *Lady Nugent* was never seen nor heard of again. About a fortnight after she sailed a hurricane raged over the Bay of Bengal, but it was not deadly enough to prevent the *Pluto* steamer and other vessels, smaller and less able to cope with the elements, reaching port safely, though it must be admitted some of them were badly damaged. The *Pluto* belonged to the Hon. East India Company's service, and was also *en route* for Rangoon with troops.

When she reached port and reported the gale several cruisers were at once despatched in search of the *Lady Nugent*, but, although they scoured the ocean between Madras and Rangoon, even visiting the islands scattered about there, they found no trace of her whatever. Now had she foundered in the cyclone, would she not have left something behind her, a boat, lifebelt, piece of ship's furniture or something, to tell her fate? Is it likely she would have gone down *en masse*. Other vessels, sunk by wave and wind, have left some sort of débris to act as a clue, why did not she?

Ah, therein, perhaps, lies the rub!

The answer to the conundrum, for conundrum it

still is, may well lie, not on faulty construction, for there was apparently no suggestion of anything defective about the *Lady Nugent*, nor in lack of experience or carelessness, but in something very different.

In 1854, and for a lengthy period both before and after, there was much discontent in the merchant service caused chiefly by poor pay and the frequent ill-usage of the men by their officers, and, in consequence, mutinies, as for example that on the *Fidelia* \* in July, 1854, were not at all uncommon. Thus, it will be seen, the possibility of mutiny in the case of the *Lady Nugent* is by no means remote, and a fact that considerably strengthens this possibility is that she had on board her troops bound for Rangoon, a station to which, in all probability, the men were very unwilling to be sent. Bearing this in mind, then, it is, surely, likely enough that these troops joined with the seamen in a common rising, murdered their officers, and taking the *Lady Nugent* to some remote port, first plundered, and then destroyed her. Another hypothesis, worthy, I think, of some consideration, is that the ship fell into the hands of pirates.

In the summer of 1854 the *Cuthbert Young*,† merchantman, was captured by Riff pirates, and gentlemen of that calling swarmed in Chinese waters and even further south.

Is it not quite likely, then, that these pirates attacked the *Lady Nugent*, and after murdering her

\* The *Fidelia*, an emigrant ship, belonging to Baring Brothers of Liverpool. See *Illustrated London News*, July 15, 1854.

† *Vide Illustrated London News*, July 15, 1854.

crew and plundering her, either sent her to the bottom or took her away to their lair ? Oriental pirates, it must be remembered, rarely showed quarter. But the key to the conundrum does not, of necessity, lie in any of these theories ; it might easily be found in something quite different, that is to say in some queer unknown and, perhaps, living horror, peculiar to those still unfathomed and but little explored waters of the Far East.



## IV

### THE "PACIFIC"

TWO years after the disappearance of the *City of Glasgow* the Atlantic, that never-failing fount of the mysterious and terrible at sea, once again produced a tragic and sensational event. The *Pacific*, one of the first mail steamers of the famous Collins Line, constructed to compete with the English Cunarders plying between Liverpool and New York, disappeared *in toto*. She was an American built boat \* of 2800 tons burden and 800 horse-power, replete with every appliance her American owners could devise for successful competition, and her Captain and officers were all deemed competent and first-rate seamen. In addition to a mail, she had a valuable cargo, and the insurance on her amounted to 2,000,000 dollars. She left Liverpool January 23, 1856, with 25 first-class passengers, including Elliot Warburton and Mr. Catherwood, famous for their researches and drawings in Central America and the East, 22 second-class passengers, and 141 crew, most, if not all, of whom were Americans. After passing out of sight of those who waved farewell to her from the British shores, she was neither seen nor heard of

\* See *Annual Register*.

again. When she became overdue all the inquiries, speculations, false hopes and bitter disappointments that had attended the loss of the *President* were, to a large extent, repeated; only, in this instance, there seems to have been no storm of sufficient magnitude to prove a possible cause of disaster, and, as in the case of the *City of Glasgow*, it was surmised that the *Pacific* had collided with an iceberg and foundered.

Here again, however, the same argument as that in the case of the *City of Glasgow* comes in, and I ask once more, would not a Captain, with experience of the Atlantic, such as the Captain of the *Pacific* had had, have known he was in the presence of ice and have taken due precautions? Is it probable that he would have steered so near to ice as to incur collision, when, by deviating a little from his course, he would have avoided all risk of such a disaster? If he did crash into a berg, surely carelessness, amounting to gross negligence on his part, could alone account for it, and are we justified in believing him to have been capable of such conduct, in face of the view that he had a most excellent character? There are times, of course, when even the ablest seaman is guilty of miscalculation, but such miscalculation is generally accounted for by some such untoward circumstance as an exceptionally dark night, or an exceptional wildness of the wind and waves, and as neither of these circumstances, we presume, was present in the case of the *Pacific*, it is inconceivable to suppose that the Captain did not detect the proximity of ice till it was too late.

The ice theory, then, if possible, is by no means probable, and, again, as in the case of the *City of*

*Glasgow*, I incline to the theory of collision with a derelict or with some fully equipped vessel, that alive, but alive only to her own interest, hove off after the collision and left the *Pacific* to sink.

It is a curious fact that nearly twenty years later another steamship, bearing the same name as the foregoing vessel, was lost \* at sea, and with all hands, saving one.

On the morning of November 7, 1875, the American ship *Messenger*, en route from San Francisco to Seattle, at about 29 miles south of Cape Flattery, espied a piece of wreckage tossing to and fro on the waves. On approaching nearer she found it was part of a pilot house, and that clinging on to it was a man, almost in the last stages of exhaustion. He was promptly taken on board the *Messenger*, and the kindly sailors having nursed him back to life, he soon gained sufficient strength to tell his story, which may be narrated as follows :

His name was Henry L. Jelly, and several days previously he had embarked at Victoria, as passenger, on board the wooden steamship *Pacific*, belonging to Messrs. Goodall, Nelson, Perkins & Company. A strong south-east gale set in soon after they started, and the vessel shipped a quantity of water, which, although it was not sufficient to create much uneasiness, was enough to keep the men employed for long spells at the pumps.

When night set in, the weather grew worse, and, at about nine o'clock, he was roused from an attempt to sleep by a tremendous crash. Realizing that something serious must have happened, he ran up

\* See *Annual Register*, November 7, 1875.

on deck, to find everything in a state of confusion. The vessel seemed to be still at sea, and not as he had fully anticipated on the rocks; and in the distance he could see coloured lights. He asked the sailors what had happened, but they didn't seem to know, and after trying in vain to obtain information he gave up in despair and returned to his cabin.

Hardly had he got there, however, when the ship gave a violent list to port, and fearing she was about to sink, he once again rushed on deck, where he now found both crew and passengers in a hopeless state of panic.

As everybody seemed to be acting on their own initiative, he got into one of the few ship's boats that contained oars, and he and another of the passengers, who had got into the boat with him, tried to lower her from the davits. Finding it impossible to do this, they cut the ropes that held her, so that she fell into the water and capsized. At first they clung on to her keel, but, later on, espying the pilot house floating close to them, they clambered on to it for greater security. Soon after this Jelly's companion died from exhaustion, and Jelly found himself alone, the sole survivor, as it was subsequently proved, of those who left Victoria on that ill-fated voyage.

The actual cause of the disaster was never known.

## V

### THE "CITY OF BOSTON"

THE lapse of time between the loss of the *Pacific* and that of the *City of Boston*, though not very great (it covered a period of fourteen years), was one that witnessed a very considerable advance in ocean navigation and ship building. The ship of 1870 was a very different vessel, both with regard to speed and construction, from that of 1856. The Atlantic crossings, for instance, took less time, by some days, in 1870, than they did in 1856, and iron frames had to a large extent supplanted the old wooden walls for which the England of the 'fifties was still so famous. Yet, strange to say, perhaps, despite this great advance in the speed and structure of ships, there was no appreciable difference in the percentage of maritime casualties, and 1870 witnessed at least one tragedy, that not only equalled any of those I have already enumerated in sensational interest, but was just as tragic as any with regard to actual loss of life. I refer to the strange disappearance of the *City of Boston*.

The *City of Boston*, belonging to the Inman line, was built by Messrs. Todd and M'Gregor in 1864. In her general build and aspect she bore a strong



THE MISSING SCREW STEAMER "CITY OF BOSTON."





resemblance to the *City of London*, which in speed rivalled the fastest vessel of the Cunard Line.\*

Besides being a mail steamer she was designed as a passenger ship of the first order, and was 305 ft. long in keel and fore-rake, and 332 ft. in length all over, with a moulded beam width of 39 ft. and a depth in hull from the bottom of her hold to her spar deck of 27 ft. She was constructed of iron, her ribs, beams and plating being all of the very best material, and her frame was bound together by stringer plates and ties. According to the more up-to-date device for safety she was transversely divided into eight compartments by seven strong and well-secured water-tight bulkheads, reaching from the keelson to the upper deck. Like all the Inman liners of the day she was ship-rigged, that is to say she carried a big spread of canvas to act in aid of her propeller in securing steadiness and speed in sailing. She was of 2278 tons of old measurement, and was propelled by two engines of 300 horse-power.

It is not without interest to note that her principal saloon, which was considered very large in those days, was 40 ft. long by 18 ft. wide, a mere hencoop compared with the main saloons on a modern first-class liner, and that it "was fitted up with the usual luxurious elegance which characterizes this line." Every department connected with the management and working of the ship was, in fact, of the "very best description."

At the time of her disappearance the propeller was, perhaps, the one and only part of her that could possibly be designated weak. It was a new two-

\* *Illustrated London News*, March 19, 1870.

flange one, fitted during her last visit to New York, her original three-flange propeller having been seriously damaged in the crossing. According to some writers on the subject, there were certain authorities on nautical matters who considered that the new propeller was not nearly powerful enough, and that, consequently, if she encountered anything like a severe gale she might have trouble ; but, as a matter of fact, most experts regarded her as a remarkably fine specimen of naval architecture, and she not only invariably received the highest premiums at Lloyd's but was placed in the highest classification by the Association of Underwriters in Liverpool.

When she left Halifax on January 28, 1870, she had, in addition \* to her Commander, Captain J. J. Halcrow, her three mates, J. Mortimer, J. Craven and W. H. James, her surgeon, Thomas Spring Rice, and her purser, William Smith, two other officers, 84 crew, 55 cabin and 52 steerage passengers, 199 in all. Her cargo was mainly food, and, apart from this, she was provisioned for at least 58 days.

As soon as it was known that she was overdue, the offices of the Inman Line were besieged with anxious inquirers and all the usual rumours relating to a vessel that was missing speedily got circulated. According to one such rumour, the *City of Boston* had been seen, with broken-down engines, making for some remote port in South America, under spread of the little canvas left to her, whilst another rumour was to the effect that a ship, so exactly like the *City of Boston* that it could be none other, had arrived in a broken-down condition in the West Indies. The

\* *Vide Annual Register*, February 26, 1870.

hopes of those who had relatives or friends on board her were thus buoyed up from time to time, their fears being further allayed by the constant and emphatic assertions of the responsible and irresponsible alike that the *City of Boston* was far too fine a vessel to have met with any really serious catastrophe.

When February became far advanced, however, and still there were no tidings whatever of her, there was an ominous change in the tone of Press and Public, and suggestions, barely hinted at before, as to the weakness of her propeller, as well as statements relating to numerous icebergs seen across the course she was believed to have taken were now openly discussed. The opinions embodied in such suggestions and statements naturally gained in strength as time went on, and by the end of February the *City of Boston*, in spite of her boasted build, was counted lost.

What actually became of her, it is now agreed, must for ever remain an unsolved mystery. No storm of any magnitude was reported to have taken place in the Atlantic after she sailed, and there seems to have been no question as to her stability. She was not apparently over-masted or badly ballasted as has been the case with other vessels, and there was nothing to give rise to the hypothesis that she might have turned turtle. On the contrary, her construction, according to the standard of those days, seems to have been as nearly as possible perfect, and if we except her two-flange propeller, from the implied weakness of which, by the way, in the absence of any terrific gale or heavy seas, no danger could accrue,

she was entirely free from any handicap whatever. The ice theory put forward in view of the fact that ice in large quantities had been seen in the Atlantic does not appear to me to be in this case even as feasible as in the cases of the *Pacific* and *City of Glasgow*, for not only was Captain Halcrow a thoroughly up-to-date officer, but his ship, second to none of the day both with regard to strength and structure, was in every respect far in advance of any of the other unfortunate vessels I have mentioned.

If Captain Halcrow did come to grief through an ice floe or iceberg it could only have been through an extraordinary lapse of his usual sound judgment, or some quite sudden and unlooked-for occurrence, such as a dense fog or violent storm, and, according to the weather statistics, neither fog nor storm of any seriousness had been experienced. Also, I might add, that with the then improved methods of lighting the mere darkness of the night should not have prevented an experienced seaman from detecting the presence of so gigantic an enemy.

Once again therefore we are obliged to consider other possibilities, and to conjure up once more those of the derelict on the one hand, and, on the other, collision with the "live" ship." And, in addition, there is also, as in the case of the *President* and *Lady Nugent*, the possibility, in this instance no doubt more remote, of some sinister influence at work on board the vessel, something that may have been at the bottom of those persistent rumours that a ship exactly like the *City of Boston* had been seen in a crippled state making for some port in Southern waters. One

very pathetic incident \* occurred in connection with the strange disappearance of this vessel. A youth called Willie, son of a widow living in Detroit, U.S.A., sailed in the *City of Boston* and was consequently included in the ranks of the missing. His mother, however, persistently refused to believe he was dead and always maintained that a Boston paper would one day announce the safe arrival of the ill-fated ship. His place was invariably laid at table, and she remarked every morning to those about her, "Willie has not arrived yet, but he is sure to turn up one day this week."

\* *Vide Notable Shipwrecks*, by Uncle Hardy, published 1880.

## VI

### H.M.S. "ATALANTA"

NO great loss at sea in the 'eighties of the last century stirred the emotions of the British public more deeply or gave rise to more abundant speculations than the loss of H.M.S. *Atalanta*.

The *Atalanta*, originally known as the *Juno*, was constructed from the design of Sir W. Symonds, and belonged to what was known as the Vestal class of frigates.

She had seen constant service, as far back as 1844, as a man-of-war; and when she ceased to be used in that capacity she was converted, first of all, into a police hulk, and on the foundering of the *Eurydice* in 1878 into a training ship for ordinary seamen. She measured 131 ft. by 40 ft. beam, with a tonnage of 923. When employed as a man-of-war she had carried 26 guns, but as a training ship she had put to sea without any armament at all. On returning from the cruise immediately prior to her last and fatal one, her officers expressed doubts as to her stability, and stated that in their opinion she was overmasted. The Admiralty then consulted the leading officials at the Portsmouth Docks, and these





THE MISSING TRAINING SHIP "ATALANTA"

[From *The Illustrated London News*, Apr. 24th, 1880]



Officials decided that it was not necessary to make any further reduction in the height of her masts—they had already been reduced 6 ft.—but advised certain repairs and alterations with regard to some of her spars. These recommendations were duly attended to, and when all that had been deemed necessary had been done, and the Admiralty had expressed their satisfaction as to her stability, the *Atalanta* once again put to sea. She sailed from Portsmouth for the West Indies on November 7, 1879.

Her commander was Captain Francis Stirling, R.N., who had seen active service in the Crimea, China and Malay Peninsula. He held high professional qualifications, and was popularly supposed to possess good judgment and all the fitting qualities for his post. The other officers on board were Lieuts. Fred. A. Blackett, Arthur Dove, and Philip E. Fisher, Navigating-Lieut. W. H. Stephens, Staff-Surgeon Edward L. Moss, M.D., Paymaster John Ashton, Sub-Lieut. Edward P. Charrington, Surgeon L. W. Corcoran, B.A., M.D., Gunner David Silk, Boatswains Fred. Standish and Richard Clancy.

The crew, consisting of more than 300, were mostly from Portsmouth and Devonport.

Owing to two cases of yellow fever on board, which broke out after they had been at sea some weeks, Captain Stirling decided to put into Bermuda and actually arrived there on January 29, 1880. While there he wrote to his wife at Southsea, saying the *Atalanta* might be expected at Spithead the first week in March, and an officer at Portsmouth got a letter from Lieut. Stephens by the same mail to the

same effect. Two days later, that is to say on January 31, the *Atalanta* left Bermuda, presumably *en route* for England, as it was understood she had orders to be off Spithead on April 4. Every one on board her was then stated to be in good health. Soon after she sailed a gale raged, extending over many hundred miles of the Atlantic, and many wrecks were reported in consequence. Still, apparently, little apprehension was felt for the safety of the *Atalanta*, and no anxiety was shown by the public on her behalf, until it was announced in the papers that she was overdue. The excitement then, especially in Portsmouth and Devonport, became intense, and, as in the cases of the *President* and *City of Boston*, the *Atalanta* furnished for a while the principal subject of conversation. This was painfully apparent in my own home, since one of the missing officers was an intimate friend of ours, and had been staying with us immediately prior to joining his ship and starting on that fatal voyage destined to be his last. As is usually the case when a ship is missing, all kinds of rumours were soon in circulation. The gunboat *Avon*, that arrived at Portsmouth from China on April 19, reported,\* when off the Azores, seeing an immense amount of wreckage all around the harbour of Fayal; but none of it, apparently, could be identified as belonging to the *Atalanta*, and actually there was nothing amongst the wreckage to indicate a very recent catastrophe. The officers of the *Avon* said they thought the *Atalanta* had encountered bad weather, and had probably drifted northward in a disabled condition; but they scouted the idea of her

\* *Vide Penny Illustrated Paper*, April 17, 1880.

having foundered or turned turtle. And others were of this opinion. For instance, Mr. Thomas Brassey, M.P., who had sailed round the world in the *Sunbeam* and was counted in the front rank of experts on nautical matters, expressed his belief that the *Atalanta* was still afloat. He thought that the gale, though sufficiently severe to have damaged and delayed her, was not nearly bad enough to have sent her to the bottom. And even, perhaps, of more value and interest than this statement was that of Admiral Sir B. J. Sullivan, who in a letter to *The Times* wrote as follows : \*

" . . . She (the *Atalanta*) has been called a sister ship to the *Eurydice*, but the truth is they were totally different, except as to tonnage and armament.

" The *Juno* (*Atalanta*) was one of the well-known Vestal class of Sir W. Symonds, a class known to be the broadest and shortest ships of the frigate class that were ever built ; while the *Eurydice* was long and narrow in comparison. Like the sloop class of Sir W. Symonds, his small frigates were the stiffest vessels under stiff sail we ever possessed ; so much so that he would not allow them at first more than 5 tons of ballast, instead of from 30 to 60 tons, which old class ships would have had.

" I only mention these facts to show that in choosing a ship of that class as a training ship the Admiralty could not possibly have made a safer choice.

" And, as it is stated that she had a full amount of ballast and reduced masts, she would, in all probability, be as safe as any ship afloat, even if her water and provisions were nearly out.

" Her stiffness would increase the risk of carrying

\* *Vide Illustrated London News*, April 24, 1880.

away a mast in a squall, and I live in hope this may have happened. The one danger that no human care can guard against is floating wrecks, or dismantled hulls of forsaken ships, which could not be seen on dark nights, and if struck by a ship going fast, the collision might prove fatal. I have no doubt that on rare occasions ships never heard of have been lost in this way."

So wrote Admiral Sullivan, and the views of a man of his experience are surely worthy of consideration. Obviously, the storm, in his opinion, was not of sufficient magnitude to sink the *Atalanta*, and as he makes no reference to icebergs, I presume he does not regard that alternative as at all probable. Also, his marked and emphatic assertions as to the stability of ~~the~~ vessel shows that he barely reckoned its having turned turtle within the region of possibility.

But more of this anon. Let us resume the thread of the story. After the *Avon* had issued her report of wreckage all around the harbour of Fayal, a number of ironclads of the Channel Fleet, consisting of the *Minotaur*, *Agincourt*, *Achilles*, and *Northumberland*, together with the *Salamis*, a fast dispatch boat, and the *Wye*, a troop and store ship, all under the command of Admiral A. W. A. Hood, C.B., were sent in search of the *Atalanta*. They cruised in line, some miles apart, and never before was there such a scouring of the sea! The *Salamis* was the first to give up the quest, and in May she returned to port with the ominous statement, "No tidings."

This, however, did not preclude the wide-spread circulation of rumours, and one\* such rumour was

\* *Vide Penny Illustrated Paper*. June 26, 1880.



to the effect that a barrel stave, that had, apparently, lain in the water about two months, and upon which had been written in lead pencil, "*Atalanta* going down, April 12, 1880. No hope, Send this to Mrs. Mary White, Piers, Sussex. James White," had been found on the Nova Scotian coast, 12 miles east of Halifax.

About the same time another rumour stated that \* a bottle had been found on the Massachusetts coast, containing a missive that gave April 17 as the date of the sinking of the vessel. There was, however, but a very slight reference to either of these "finds" in the Press, and that being the case, it must be surmised that they were not regarded as genuine. Another rumour † was associated with the barque *Cumbria*. It was said that the *Cumbria*, on arriving at Queenstown, reported having passed a raft made with spars and lashed with ropes, presumably those of a ship, on April 27, in the region of the Island of Corvo; and having seen, not far from the raft, a number of casks and other objects suggesting wreckage. In consequence of this report the question appears to have been raised as to whether what the *Cumbria* was alleged to have seen could in any way be connected with the *Atalanta*, but presumably no answer to this question was forthcoming, and the matter being dropped, the hoped-for elucidation of the mystery surrounding the disappearance of the *Atalanta* remained as remote as ever.

About this time, too, H.M.S. *Wye*, ‡ which had left Gibraltar on April 20, to help in the search for

\* See *P.I.P.*, June 26, 1880. † *Vide P.I.P.*, May 29, 1880.

‡ *Vide P.I.P.*, June, 1880.

the *Atalanta*, had a curious experience. On the 24th instant, when many miles from land, her Captain, Commander Sarratt, saw a small boat at sea. In it was found an old man, who, though still alive, was too ill to speak. He was, of course, immediately transferred to the *Wye*, and medically treated, but, in spite of every effort to restore his failing strength, he died without being able to utter a word. It was naturally thought at first that he was a survivor of the *Atalanta*, and considerable excitement ensued in consequence, but nothing happened to substantiate this view, and later, it was proved, practically beyond all doubt, that the deceased man was merely a fisherman belonging to some more or less local port.

Hence another disillusion, and the problem as to what had become of the *Atalanta* was no nearer a solution than before.

Let us once again review the possibilities. We will take the ice theory first. The gunboat *Avon* and other vessels spoke of ice being seen in the Atlantic about the time the *Atalanta* left Bermuda, but the same arguments against a collision with a floe or berg may be used in this case as in those I have previously dealt with, and, apparently, neither Mr. Brassey nor Admiral Sullivan, both first-class authorities, thought such a theory worthy of consideration.

The storm theory comes next. Though, as has been stated, a gale of considerable force raged in the Atlantic immediately after the *Atalanta* sailed, neither the officers of the *Avon*, who had actually experienced the storm, nor other eminent experts considered it was severe enough to have sunk the

missing vessel. Some papers alluded to her as a cracking ship, but not until the bulk of the people had abandoned all hope of her turning up, and to discount such an accusation there is the wholly satisfactory verdict of the Admiralty and officials at Portsmouth in the autumn of 1879, prior to her sailing; the opinion of the officers of the *Avon*, who scouted the idea of her having turned turtle, a habit not uncommon to some crank vessels; and, lastly, the letter of Admiral Sullivan, in which he expressed a practically unqualified belief in her sailing qualities and stability.

I think, therefore, we must set aside the hypotheses of ice and storm and turning turtle as possibilities of the very slightest order. The theory of the derelict as a possible solution of the mystery is suggested by Admiral Sullivan, who, however, admits that these ocean nuisances only bring about a real catastrophe on rare occasions. What he omitted to tell us was whether, in the event of the *Atalanta* having sunk through colliding with a derelict, she would have gone to the bottom in a trice without leaving any wreckage whatever behind her? I am no naval expert, but common sense inclines me to an answer in the negative. At any rate, such a complete eradication from the sea's surface does not appear to me to be in the least degree probable.

But if neither ice, storm, turning turtle, nor collision can furnish a feasible solution, what alternative is there?

Well, there is an alternative, and probably those who consider it will assign to it a degree of possibility in accordance with their estimate of human nature.

It was hinted at the time, though naturally, perhaps, in a vague and indefinite manner, that there might have been "trouble" of some kind on board the *Atalanta*, and certain concurrent rumours, though, also, it must be admitted, vague and indefinite, to the effect that a ship, closely resembling the *Atalanta*, had been seen making surreptitiously for a port in South Atlantic waters, would seem to have invested these hints of "trouble" with a certain amount of feasibility. But whether they had a separate existence, or were merely the outcome of the somewhat sinister rumours aforesaid, must be left to the individual to decide.

### ADDENDUM

Another alternative, remote as it may seem to be, is that the *Atalanta* collided with the *Bay of Biscay*, and that both sank. The *Bay of Biscay*, acknowledged to be one of the finest merchant ships afloat, iron, of 1611 tonnage, and commanded by Captain Longridge, left Rangoon for Liverpool, in October, 1879. She was last seen on February 7, 1880, off the Western Isles, and, on becoming overdue at Liverpool, was eventually posted missing. From that day to this her fate has remained a complete mystery. The date of her disappearance corresponding with that of the disappearance of the *Atalanta* makes it just possible that the two vessels may have come into collision, and have sunk simultaneously.

That the *Atalanta*, to have collided with the *Bay of Biscay*, must have been very much out of her course, would be explained by the fact that the gale known

to have raged during the first week in February might very easily have driven her even as far as the Western Isles. Also, in support of this theory, it must be remembered that the gunboat *Avon* reported an *immense amount* of wreckage in and around the harbour of Fayal. It is true that no part of this wreckage was ever identified as part of either of the *Atalanta* or the *Bay of Biscay*, but because of that can we affirm positively that it had no association with either of the missing vessels? Again I think that common sense suggests a negative reply.

## VII

### H.M.S. "WASP"

**N**O small degree of sensation was experienced in the autumn of 1887, when it became known that grave anxiety was felt in the Far East concerning the safety of H.M.S. *Wasp*.

H.M.S. *Wasp* was a new type of gunboat belonging to a class of vessels technically known as "composite." She had been built for the Government by Sir W. Armstrong (afterwards Lord Armstrong) & Co., of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and was a sister ship to *The Rattler*. Her armament consisted of six guns, her engines were 670 (nominal), and 1000 horse-power (nominal); she had a displacement of 670 tons and carried very little sail, being provided only with yards on her foremast. The Admiralty thought highly of her, and regarding her as an extremely useful pattern, they had had six other gunboats constructed on exactly similar lines. She was commissioned on April 21, 1887, and on the 21st of the following May she left Sheerness, under command of Lieutenant B. J. H. Adamson, for Shanghai, to take the place of the *Midge*, which was ordered home, as unfit for any further service.



She reached the Malay Peninsula, presumably without mishap, and on September 10, 1887, sailed from Singapore for Shanghai. She was never seen nor heard of again. The voyage from Singapore to Shanghai was calculated to take the *Wasp* about sixteen days, and it was expected she would, according to custom, call *en route* at Hong Kong. It was her failure to do so that first aroused the suspicion that something might have happened to her; but, at the same time, in naval circles, nothing more serious was anticipated than that she might have been damaged in the typhoon that was known to have raged in the South China Sea, and, consequently, delayed, owing to her having been obliged to put into some port in the Phillipine Isles for shelter and repair. As the days went by, however, and she failed to put in an appearance at Shanghai, grave alarm was aroused, and a systematic search for her in Eastern waters was commenced.

The following telegraphic communications received from Hong Kong by the Admiralty and published in the English Press only increased the general fear and agitation. They were these,\* and they tell their own tale :

"Gunboats returned. No tidings of *Wasp*. *Bandu* still searching." And again, "*Leander* returned. Thoroughly searched Paracels. Telegraph ship *Recorder* arrived. Searched coasts of Cochin China and Hainan. No trace of *Wasp*."

Several days later another announcement appeared † in the Press, stating that H.M.S. *Cordelia*

\* *Vide Daily Telegraph*, October 17 and 19, 1887.

† *Ibid.*, October 22, 1887.

and H.M.S. *Firebrand*, under the commands, respectively, of Captain Boys and Lieut.-Commander John Denison, were about to proceed to Hong Kong to search the shoals between latitudes  $12^{\circ}$  and  $6^{\circ}$ . They did search, and well, too, but with no result. There was not the slightest sign anywhere of the missing ship. And strange to say, in this case, there seem to have been very few rumours concerning her fate. She simply vanished, no one knew how, when or where, and, apparently, the only suggestion that was made to account for her disappearance was that she foundered somewhere between Singapore and Shanghai in a typhoon. However, that all had not been well on board her may be gathered from the following portion of a letter,\* which her Commander, Lieut. B. J. H. Adamson, wrote to his mother, sometime before he left the Malay Peninsula :

“ I don't care much for my command. Things may turn out better, but with the two inexperienced officers I have to assist me, I am Captain, First Lieutenant and navigator all in one. Since leaving England I have never been in bed before daylight at sea.”

So much then for the ways of the Admiralty. It would seem that even in those days it had much to answer for, and that it has not benefited from experience, was, I think, amply demonstrated during the Great War, when young and hopelessly inexperienced officers were put in charge of large numbers of men and important positions. It makes one weep, only to think of the many lives that have been lost

\* *Vide Daily Telegraph*, October 22, 1887.

through asinine officials at Headquarters and in charge of Departments.

But this is digression. The problem we are faced with is what became of the *Wasp*. Did she founder in a typhoon at sea, or did some other fate, even more terrible, befall her? Now, the entire absence of wreckage always makes me somewhat suspicious, for it is surely only in very rare circumstances that a vessel goes to the bottom *in toto*; she generally goes to pieces first, and though the bulk of her would sink, many bits of her would float and eventually be washed ashore. In the annals of maritime disasters you might search in vain for the case of a steamship or even ironclad sinking without leaving any tell-tale trace of her behind, and why, I ask, should the *Wasp* have been an exception to this rule? Honestly I do not believe she was, and I do not believe she foundered in that typhoon at all; I think it is far more likely that she got out of her track, through the inexperience of those handling her (in all probability they had no knowledge at all of Eastern waters), and ran ashore on some island or remote part of the Chinese coast. The Chinese, especially away from the big towns, were pretty rapacious and barbarous in those days—they still are so, in spite of their adoption of European garments and the veneer of Western civilization—and what is more probable than that they seized the damaged *Wasp*, plundered and destroyed her, and coolly did away with her crew?

She was, oddly enough, the second H.M.S. *Wasp* to perish within a few years, the first *Wasp*, after which she was named, being totally lost off Tory Island, on the West Coast of Ireland, and also in what

may be regarded as mysterious circumstances. It was in September, 1884, and she was on her way,\* under the command of Commander Nicholls, R.N., to Moville, to take the Sheriff and an evicting party to the Island of Instrahul at the mouth of Loch Foyle.

On September 22 she encountered bad weather and a heavy squall, and getting out of her proper course drifted on to the rocky coast of Tory Island in some such fashion, as, in accordance with the theory I suggested, did her namesake on the Chinese coast, three years later. There she simply went to pieces, and out of the fifty-eight on board her, only eight escaped. But she left wreckage, plenty of it.

At the court martial, which was subsequently held, a verdict of "bad navigation on the part of her responsible officers" was returned, and, maybe, this was the cause of her disaster. On the other hand, in view of the fact that she was on her way to assist in an eviction, the accident may well have been connived at by some Irish member of her crew, who sympathized strongly with those who were about to be peremptorily ordered to vacate their homes.

\* *Annual Register*, September, 1884.

PART II

CREWS THAT HAVE DISAPPEARED





## VIII

### THE CASE OF THE "JAMES CHESTER" \*

**P**ERHAPS, even stranger than the disappearance of ships *in toto* is the complete disappearance of their crews, only.

Here is one such instance. On the morning of February 28, 1855, the small trading vessel *Marathon* of Newcastle-on-Tyne was ploughing her way in roughish water in latitude 30° N. and longitude 40° W. Suddenly the man on the look-out in the bow gave vent to an exclamation. About three points away on the front bow he espied a largish ship of, perhaps, some 1000 odd tons. He called out to the Captain, who happened to be on deck at the time, and the latter immediately fetched his glasses and had a good stare at the stranger.

"Humph," he ejaculated, "she's seen a good deal of rough weather, otherwise her riggings wouldn't be in such a state of disorder, but what the deuce is she up to?" He shouted to the first mate, John Thomas, who at once joined him, and looking through the glasses was also immensely struck by the behaviour of the vessel. Her steering was most remarkable. She kept on yawing, and every now and again seemed

\* *Vide News of the World*, March, 1855.

about to tack and make off in a different direction. Then, on she would come again, in the most erratic fashion.

"Something queer, there, sir," Thomas observed.

"Will you inquire?"

"Yes," the Captain said shortly, "I will hail her, as soon as she gets a bit nearer." By this time all the crew of the *Marathon* were on deck, leaning over the bulwarks, and gazing with absorbing interest at the stranger.

On she came, still keeping up the same strange antics, and when she was within hailing distance, the Captain shouted out:

"Barque ahoy," and asked who she was. There was no reply. Again he shouted, and again no answer.

"What do you make of it?" he said, lowering his trumpet and addressing Thomas, who was leaning forward as far as possible over the bulwarks by his side.

"I don't like the looks of it at all, sir," Thomas responded. "She's not damaged, and seems to be perfectly sound and whole, and yet, dash me, if I can see anyone aboard her."

"Get out one of the boats," the Captain remarked tersely, "and find out what's wrong."

Thomas gave a gruff "Aye, aye, sir," and in a few minutes one of the biggest of the *Marathon's* boats was being pulled vigorously in the direction of the stranger, whose name, *James B. Chester*, writ in bold lettering, was soon noticeable.

"Ship ahoy," Thomas shouted as they came up alongside her. "Ship ahoy!" There was no answer,

only a loud and solemn flapping of canvas and the wash of the waves against her hull.

"In oars," Thomas commanded, and as a wave carried the boat to within a few feet of the vessel, he lunged forward with a boat-hook and made fast to her side. A few moments later, and, in company with two of the boat's crew, he was standing on the deck of the stranger.

It was absolutely deserted, and in some disorder. Ends of rope, for instance, were lying about, coils of halliards were lifted off the pins and thrown down, some portions of the rigging were adrift, her sails were flying loose; yet she seemed a snug enough ship, her decks were a good colour, the paint fresh, the brass-work fairly bright, and she was flush fore and aft, while her binnacles, pump, capstan, skylights, and companions were in excellent order. She apparently lacked nothing, in fact, but her crew. John Thomas realized this as he stood stock still by the bulwarks and gazed slowly around.

"Where the —— are they all?" he ejaculated. "What the —— has become of them!"

"If you ask me," one of the men remarked. "I think it is a case of the devil. Ee's be'n in this ship right enough."

"And, mebbe, 'ee's 'ere now," another of the boat crew chimed in.

Keeping close to one another, for there was something unpleasantly suggestive in the tense silence of the vessel, they crossed the deck on tiptoe, pausing in the fo'c'sle, whilst Thomas, pointing to the scuttle, exclaimed in a hoarse whisper:

"Ha, what's that, a slush-lamp?" Closer

observation proving it to be, however, no artificial light, but only a reflector of the sunlight, Thomas shouted :

“Hulloa, below there,” and on receiving no reply, he caught hold of the sides of the hatchway, and dropped down below.

One by one the men followed him. Not a sound greeted them, saving the creaking and groaning of the rudder, and the eternal lap, lapping of the water. Keeping even closer to one another than before the men groped their way in and out the hammocks on the fo’c’sle, and then proceeded amidships. Arriving there confusion greeted them on all sides. The cabins were all upside down, furniture overturned and pushed about anywhere, chests open, and clothes and knick-knacks scattered broadcast.

The compass and ship’s papers were missing ; yet there were no signs of violence, no mutilated bodies, no pools of blood, no bloodstained weapons. Just wild disorder, nothing more. Her cargo, consisting of wool and provisions, appeared to be intact. After searching her thoroughly, Thomas and his companions returned to the *Marathon*, and reported to the Captain, who then took charge of the abandoned ship and towed her into the Albert Docks, Liverpool.

Apparently no trace of her crew was ever discovered. What had become of them ? The account given in the Press at the time made no mention of any boat being missing from the davits, hence one presumes that those usually suspended to the davits were all there ; but what one cannot ascertain is whether or not the ship carried any boat, apart from those suspended to the davits. But even if she had done

so, and that the crew had gone off in it, should we be justified in supposing there had been a mutiny on board? The state of disorder in the cabin, and the missing compass and papers certainly suggest robbery, but the total absence of blood also makes it seem pretty certain that there was no violence or loss of life. Besides, it is scarcely likely that the crew of the *James Chester*, merely for the sake of a little booty, would have faced the very obvious risk, with the chances all against them, of a certain and immediate death; for, needless to say, the boats of a much larger and better equipped vessel than the *James Chester* launched in the mid-Atlantic would not survive for long the buffeting of the wind and waves, in what is usually one of the very worst of the winter months. Sane men, and one presumes the crew of the *James Chester* were sane, do not court destruction for petty gains; chests of gold might tempt them but not a handful or two of mixed coins. Mutiny, then, though possible is not very probable, and the piracy theory is perhaps still less likely, in spite of the fact that the African coast, where the Riff and other pirates were still fairly active, was not very far off. The total absence of any sign of violence would alone render such a theory almost, if not quite, untenable. The reason is, of course, obvious, for if pirates had actually boarded the *James Chester*, blood must assuredly have flowed, since it is certain that no British Captain or British crew would submit to being borne away, either to death or captivity, without rendering a very good account of themselves. Also, it must be remembered that the *James Chester*, although in a state of disorder, was

found with its contents more or less intact, and pirates, who are out for plunder, do not, as a rule, relinquish their booty; that is to say, they do not usually seize a ship and then abandon it. No, I do not think either mutiny or piracy can explain the disappearance of the crew of the *James Chester*.

Panic, in my opinion, can alone account for it. As the case of the *Squando*, to which I refer later on, proves, sailors in the last century were generally very superstitious, a few, perhaps, still are, and it seems to me quite likely that something occurred on board the *James Chester* that threw the crew, one and all, into such a rare state of terror that they collected together a few valuables in the greatest haste, thus creating a scene of the utmost confusion and disorder, and quitted the vessel in a body, preferring to run the risk of a watery grave, than to face, literally, they knew not what.



## IX

### THE "MARIE CELESTE"

IN dealing with the subject of missing crews, one naturally, perhaps, recalls, first of all, the case of the *Marie Celeste*, and this, for the simple reason that in recent years it has attracted the attention of the general public more than any other, although, oddly enough, in this country at all events, it would seem to have aroused little interest at the time it occurred.

Briefly, it was this. At about noon on December 5, 1872, somewhere about the same latitude and longitude as that in which the *James Chester* was found, Captain Boyce of the British barque *Dei Gratia* spied a brig several points away on the port side. Then there followed what was more or less a repetition of what occurred in the case of the *James Chester*. Boyce noticing that the strange ship was yawing in a very remarkable manner spoke about it to his mate, with the result that one of the *Dei Gratia's* boats was lowered and rowed in the direction of the stranger. On getting close to the latter Captain Boyce hailed her. There was no reply. Then the mate tried his luck, still no answer. By this time

they were near enough to read the name *Marie Celeste* on her bows, and to note that she was newly painted, and exteriorly, at least, in excellent order.

They came nearer still, hailed her again, and, on receiving no response, Captain Boyce and the mate climbed up her side and dropped on to her deck. They looked apprehensively around, fully expecting to see something dreadful, but they were agreeably surprised. There were no horrors, at least no visible ones, anywhere, and spars, rigging, and deck's furniture, everything seemed in apple-pie order, while hanging in the davits was the full complement of boats. Walking to the companion hatchway Captain Boyce and his mate shouted together. There was no response, and the silence that followed, when the sound of their voices had died away, was so pronounced, that they glanced at one another in something rather more, perhaps, than mere consternation. A sense of duty, however, led them on, and keeping close beside one another they cautiously descended the companion ladder. Below deck, in the body of the ship, the stillness became even more emphatic, and their steps awoke loud, hollow sounding echoes. Still they kept on, and every moment their amazement grew.

In the fo'c'sle rows of empty hammocks swayed gently to the motion of the ship; in the deserted galley there were pans full of cooked food, standing upon the stove apparently ready to be dished up; whilst eatables of all sorts were in evidence everywhere,—which strongly suggested that the ship, at least, lacked nothing in the shape of “grub,” and upon the table in one of the cabins was laid a substantial

meal. Indeed, the half-consumed cups of coffee, eggs, bacon, and bread and butter, plainly showed that it was whilst some of those on board were partaking of a hearty breakfast that the something occurred, which led to the sudden desertion of the vessel.

A sewing-machine and thimble pointed to the presence of a woman on board, and possibly a child, too, since a child's pinafore, in the process of being made, was also in evidence. That robbery played no part in the mystery was sufficiently apparent from the fact that nothing had been disturbed. Several pieces of jewellery, including watches and rings, were lying on the dressing chests, obviously just as their owners had left them, whilst it was clear that no locks had been forced, and the safe in the Captain's cabin was intact. The chronometer was missing, but the log-book was in the mate's cabin; and the last writing in it was dated September 2, 1872. A glance through it revealed nothing, that is to say nothing that could in any way help to elucidate the mystery. The ship had encountered no bad weather of late, there had been no illness on board, and no disturbances of any kind.

Yet, where were the crew, and why had they vanished?

On the wall of what was presumed to be the Captain's cabin hung a cutlass, and on examining it, Boyce and his companion saw what they took to be bloodstains on the blade. This made them search the ship more carefully, and they discovered similar marks on some of the woodwork. But why, they argued, if there had been violence, was there not

more blood about, and why was the sword put back in the scabbard ?

Completely baffled, they returned to their own ship, and towing the *Marie Celeste* into Gibraltar, reported the matter to the harbour authorities, who finding out that the deserted ship was American at once informed the local United States Consul. Little more remains to be told of the actual finding of the *Marie Celeste* as reported by Captain Boyce. She proved to be a U.S.A. brig of some 500 tons, and she had left New York in September, 1872, *en route* for Genoa, under the command of Captain Griggs, whose wife and child were believed to have been with him. What subsequently happened to those on board her was never, at least as far as the general public is concerned, known.

It was officially stated \* that a careful examination of the cutlass found in the cabin of the *Marie Celeste* and also the woodwork of that vessel proved both to be free from blood.

Presuming, then, that there had been no bloodshed, and discarding as untenable the theory of wholesale suicide, what had become of the crew ? They must either have got away in some boat of their own, or have been taken on board and carried off by some passing vessel.

Now, if the former, what had they gone off in ? According to Boyce's testimony, all the boats of the *Marie Celeste* were still hanging from the davits, and there was no evidence to show that a raft—and it must have been a pretty big one to have held so many—had been made. But they must have got

\* Said to be in Archives of Department of State, U.S.A.

away in or on something, and as it is extremely unlikely that they carried any boats besides those in the davits, the only alternative is a passing ship. It was rumoured that several ships had seen the *Marie Celeste* shortly before she was boarded by the *Dei Gratia*, but as she made no response to their signals, they had passed her by and gone on their course, in the belief that nothing was amiss with her. Now, if this were the case, if these ships did signal to her and she took no notice of their signals, one must conclude either that her crew were then actually missing, or that all was well on board her and she did not bother to reply.

Well, I think it is pretty certain some ship, perhaps one of the ships referred to above, did get into communication with the *Marie Celeste* and did take away her crew. But, if so, what was the reason, and what became of the crew afterwards? In my opinion the reason most probable was mutiny. Many U.S.A. captains at that date, and even later, so it has been stated, treated their crew, white as well as black, shamefully, and what, in my opinion, may have happened was this : a mutiny may have been planned and have been carried out, while the Captain, his wife, child, and first mate were at breakfast. Taken unawares and seized before the males of the party could procure arms, they were thrown, one after the other, into the sea. Something of the same sort happened in December, 1853, on the *Berenice*. Her partly burned hull was found in the Straits of Gasper,\* near Marabayer, and it subsequently transpired that her crew had mutinied, and after murdering the

\* *Vide Annual Register*, December, 1853.



Captain, his wife, all the officers, and a passenger, and plundering and setting fire to the vessel, had successfully made off. The fate of those they had butchered remained a mystery for some time; and had not certain of the mutineers confessed to their crime, the truth concerning the *Berenice* and those on board her would never have been known.

Again, as recently as 1886, there was a mutiny on board the U.S.A. vessel *Frank M. Thayer*, and the mutineers, who had at first succeeded in capturing her, might easily, as those on board the *Berenice* did, have set fire to the ship and made good their escape, but for a sudden turn of luck against them. Indeed, it was entirely owing to chance that their plot failed, and they themselves perished. I merely quote these two cases—selecting them at random out of many—to show the sort of thing that might very well have occurred in the case of the *Marie Celeste*.

But, if something of this kind did happen in the case we are discussing, what became of the mutineers? The boats being still in the davits, according to Captain Boyce, when the ship was found, it is clear that the mutineers did not escape in them. Nor, as I have already said, was there any evidence to show that they had made a raft. What then? Why they *must* have escaped by means of some other ship.

Perhaps they lied to the Captain who took them on board, inventing some plausible tale to account for the absence of their skipper; or, perhaps, they told part of the truth, and in such a manner as to gain the sympathy of the strangers, who decided to help them and say nothing about it, and this would be all the more likely to have happened, supposing the said



strangers had been foreigners, who were not too well versed in the English tongue, and whose ideas of duty, discipline and conscience were not of the highest order. The mutineers then, safely ensconced on board, might have been content to land in some foreign port ; or, on the other hand, having once tasted blood, they might have gone on killing. Anyhow, it is quite conceivable that they might have seized those in authority on board the ship that had befriended them, and have served them as they did the Captain and his breakfast party of the *Marie Celeste*. Afterwards, in all probability, they would take the vessel to some remote shore, where they could destroy her, and so cover up the traces of their guilt. A small foreign trading ship might so easily be lost, about the same time as the crew of the *Marie Celeste*, without any notice being taken of it.

Thus the mystery could be explained in some such manner as this, providing always, of course, that the Captain of the *Dei Gratia* really did find the *Marie Celeste* crewless, and in the condition he reported her to the authorities at Gibraltar. But supposing he did not find the *Marie Celeste* crewless ?

I know that it has always been taken for granted that Captain Boyce's account of the case was a true one, but was it ? Is it not possible in the event of a mutiny having occurred on board the *Marie Celeste*, that Captain Boyce, with, perhaps, some inside knowledge of extenuating circumstances, himself might have befriended the mutineers, the story of his finding the vessel deserted and in the condition he stated being merely an extraordinarily clever invention on his part for throwing dust in the eyes of the authorities ?

## X

### THE "HERMANIA"

**A**NOTHER case of an abandoned ship and missing crew that was never quite satisfactorily cleared up is that of the *Hermania*.

On the morning of April 31, 1849, the mackerel boat *Fame*, No. 19 of Rye, Captain John Hyde, was engaged in fishing about ten miles south-east of the Eddystone lighthouse, when she got her nets fouled in some loose spars and ropes, lying close beside a foreign looking craft of about 100 tons, bearing the name *Hermania* on her stern and bows. Captain Hyde went through the usual formula of hailing her, and, on getting no reply, resolved to board her. He found her in a peculiar plight. Her mainmast had gone, broken right off, leaving a stump only, of about one foot in height, above deck. Her mizen had gone by board in the same fashion, but her bowsprit and jib-boom were still standing. The attention of Captain Hyde and his companions, however, was more particularly concentrated on certain obvious and very remarkable indications of a collision.

The *Hermania* had received on the starboard side, amidships, a tremendous blow, which had carried

\* See *Annual Register*, March, 1849.

away her bulwarks, and, no doubt, dismasted her. But the violence with which she had been struck was not only demonstrated by the damage she had sustained; it was clearly shown by the fact that the colliding vessel had left behind her, wedged into the round-house of the vessel she had run into, some of her figurehead and gilding, with about 8 ft. of her bows. Hence, undoubtedly, the two vessels had been interlocked, and, presumably, it was while they were thus interlocked, that everyone on board the *Hermania* getting hopelessly panicked had fled from their own ship and scrambled into the one that had struck her. For there, in her chocks, and absolutely whole and uninjured, was a boat, apparently the only one she possessed. Lying beside it, in further evidence of the curious nature of the collision, were some neatly coiled ropes, while hanging, quite undisturbed, over her quarter was an accommodation ladder. Also, to add to the strangeness of it all, it was proved that the collision could only have occurred at a very recent date, from the discovery in one of the cabins of a watch that was still ticking, and the lamp in the binnacle that was still burning.

On examining other cabins below deck, the fishermen concluded that the Captain's wife and child had been with him, since not only a cradle, but articles of female apparel were in evidence, whilst to indicate to what extent they and every one else on board the *Hermania* must have been panicked, apparently no attempt had been made to remove any of the gold and silver and other valuables from various chests and elsewhere. Indeed, it speaks well for the honesty of the men of Rye that quite a considerable sum of

money eventually found its way into the coffers of the State.

Their exploration of the *Hermania* completed, the fishermen cut away her shrouds and loose gear, and later, with the assistance of a Plymouth trawler, towed her into Sutton Pool.

The reason her case created so little sensation in this country may, perhaps, be attributed to the fact that she was Dutch (an examination of her papers by the port authorities proved her to be so), and the English public in those days took little or no interest in any foreign event, unless it was of great national importance, or, in some way or another, affected the relations of the foreign country in question with their own country. The case of the *Hermania*, however, deserves attention, at least so it seems to me, because it is, in many respects, more than ordinarily interesting. There is little doubt, of course, that her crew boarded the colliding vessel, which, from the portions of the figurehead she left behind, was thought to be American, but what became of that vessel subsequently? Apparently she was never traced.\* Was it, one wonders, the aggressive ship that actually received the death blow? If such were the case, she would, of course, have foundered soon afterwards, and those who had fled to her for safety would have perished with her. Such an irony of fate is not without a parallel and that this did really happen, is, in my opinion, quite probable.

\* I can find no further allusion to the catastrophe either in the *Annual Register* or in the Press.

## XI

### THE MAN IN THE BUNK

**Y**ET another case of an abandonment, that presents, at least, one or two novel features, is that of the vessel which was found on the Girdler Sands \* in the autumn of 1856.

One morning, in the second week in November of the aforesaid year, the smack *New Union*, Captain, Thomas Sandy, was ploughing her way merrily through a choppy sea in Princes Channel. Suddenly Sandy, who was scanning the horizon thoughtfully, uttered an ejaculation. About three knots away, seaward, apparently in distress on the Girdler Sands, was a brigantine.

“Do you see her?” Sandy exclaimed, jerking his finger at the strange vessel, “she’s got stuck there right enough, and unless we get her off, she’ll break before very long. A furrener, eh?”

“Yes, Capen,” one of the other men responded, “she’s furren, you can tell that by her build. Dutch or Swedish, maybe. There’ll be something in the salvage.” And a smile came over his face at the thought of it.

\* *News of the World*, November 23, 1856.

“ ’Tis not the salvage I’m thinking of,” Sandy replied, “ it’s the men. We must get ’em away from there quick.”

The man at the helm nodded, and in a few moments the *New Union* had altered her course, and was plunging resolutely ahead for the much dreaded sands. The wind being with them the three miles was soon covered, and Sandy, putting his hands to his mouth, hailed the strange vessel at the top of his voice. “ Ship ahoy ; ship ahoy,” he bawled, but there was no response, only the angry wash of the waves against the brigantine’s sides, and the distant and plaintive crying of the sea gulls.

Again he shouted, and again, as before, silence. “ Odd,” he remarked to the three men who formed his crew, “ I can’t see anyone on board her. What can have become of ’em all ? There ain’t enough sea to have washed ’em away. We’ll board her and find out.”

A few minutes later and the *New Union* lay heaving and tossing alongside the stranger, and Sandy, with two of his men, quickly scrambled on board. The deck was deserted. Making for the main hatchway, Sandy shouted again, this time, “ Below there, ahoy.” Still there was no answer, and keeping in a body the three men promptly descended the companion ladder. Not a soul was to be seen, and the stillness and atmosphere alike suggested desertion. On opening the door of the principal cabin, however, and peering in, they received a shock, for lying in the bunk, covered with a piece of canvas, was a body ; the body of a man in seafaring kit.



"A corpse," one of the crew of the *New Union* whispered in awestruck tones.

"Looks like it," Sandy said gruffly. "Anyhow we must make sure."

Pausing for a moment, everything was so very still and solemn, Sandy cleared his throat, and then walking to the bunk, his two companions following him slowly, he leaned forward, and catching hold of the canvas drew it cautiously aside. What he saw, however, made him ejaculate loudly. Staring up at the three men with wide open, glaring, expressionless eyes was the face of a full-bearded man, the lips and chin bathed in blood which had evidently gushed from the mouth. It was a nasty sight, and Sandy and his companions recoiled from it in horror.

"There's been foul play here," Sandy said at length, looking at the corpse, as if too fascinated to remove his gaze.

"Seems like it," one of the other men responded ; "we'd better not touch it though, had we, Thomas ?"

"No, certainly not," Sandy replied, "otherwise we might get into trouble. Everything must be left just as it is for the police to see. Hark, do you hear anything ?"

The three men held their breath and listened, and a solemn ticking at once became audible. "That's it," Sandy suddenly exclaimed, pointing at the chest opposite the bunk, "a clock, and the fact that it's still going proves this ship can't have been deserted long."

"If it is deserted," one of the men observed, glancing apprehensively around him ; "hadn't we better make sure ? There may be more like that,"

and he jerked his head in the direction of the bunk. The three men then proceeded to search the ship, advancing with slow and cautious steps, as if expecting every moment to encounter some fresh horror, or to be sprung upon by some one in ambush. To their relief, however, nothing happened. There were no more bodies, living or dead, and there was no further indication of anything unusual having taken place.

The ship appeared to be in very good order, and to hail from some foreign port, with a cargo of wheat. When they had satisfied themselves that it really was abandoned, they at once set to work and towed it into Whitstable. Later on, an inquest on the man found in the bunk was held in that town by Mr. Delasaux, and several perplexing points arose.

The flow of blood, apparently from the mouth of the deceased, suggested violence, but there were no external marks whatever on the body, and it was much too decomposed (the man must have died at least five days prior to his being found) to enable the cause of death to be known.

The question of his identity then arose. Samuel Crawthorn, a mariner, identified the body as that of a foreigner he had seen five months previously at Ipswich, but he did not know his name, and had never come across him since. No further information was forthcoming, and the inquest concluded with the unsatisfactory verdict of "Found dead." Who the man was, how he died, and what became of the crew of the vessel upon which he was found, were questions which could not be answered, and the affair is still as profound a conundrum as ever.

Of the suggested theories regarding it, all seem equally probable ; but, if one must be counted the most feasible, it should, I think, be the following.

We must suppose, first of all, that the dead man, when alive, was Captain of the ship. His body being where it was, *i.e.* in the bunk in the Captain's cabin, gives sufficient support to this supposition.

Tyrannical and brutal, as so many captains in those days were, he had, probably, ill-treated the crew, and at last, goaded to desperation, they had retaliated, with fatal results.

The man they feared and hated, dead, slain by them, a panic at once ensued. Murder was a capital offence, punishable in England by hanging. What should they do ? Fly, but whither ? They could not land on the English coast, for the English had little sympathy with foreigners and were sure to ask awkward questions. Where then ? In France ? Yes, the French having once tasted of revolution and democracy, had wider sympathies, were larger hearted, and not so insular. They would go to them, tell some plausible tale of shipwreck, and trust to luck.

And this is what I think they resolved to do. But whether they ever reached France one cannot say. Very probably not. The Channel is often an ugly place for small boats, especially in November and the winter months, and, with the chances all against them, what is more likely than that they perished in the attempt ?



PART III

STRANGE DEEDS ON BOARD SHIP





## XII

### THE MASSACRE ON BOARD THE "E. A. JOHNSON"

ON the morning of March 21, 1860, a boat with three men in it might have been seen in the Bay off Staten Isle, New York.\* The men, resting on their oars, were staring at an oyster sloop, some little distance from them, and commenting on her odd appearance and behaviour. Her sails were torn and hanging over her side, and she was drifting aimlessly along, as if the man at her helm was either absent or asleep.

"Better get a little nearer, I reckon," one of the occupants of the boat remarked, after a slight pause, "and find out what's wrong."

His companions nodded, and once more plying their oars, they proceeded to row vigorously in the direction of the strange little vessel.

Presently one of them, peering forward, spat out a long stream of tobacco juice and then exclaimed:

"The *E. A. Johnson*. That's her name sure, I can see it now distinctly. Why, ain't she Burr's boat, from Islip, Long Island?"

"Burr's boat right enough," the man who had

\* *News of the World*, April 8, 1860, and June 24, 1860.

spoken first replied. "I wonder, ken anything be wrong with the ole man?"

He leaned forward as he spoke, one hand still on the rudder, and gazed earnestly at the sloop. Then he opened his mouth to its full extent and gave the usual, "Ship ahoy." There was no reply. "Ship ahoy," he yelled again, and again there was silence. By this time they were close alongside the sloop, and it was necessary to ship oars. Another minute or so and all three were on her deck. What they then saw, however, made them involuntarily shrink back. The deck was a shambles. On the sails, mast, stove, and companion hatch, there was blood, blood everywhere, while on the starboard quarter was the imprint of a bloody hand. It was the same below deck, whither all three presently went with faltering steps. Tables, chairs and every other article of furniture was overturned, broken and saturated with blood; there was an unbroken line of blood from the cabin to the guards, and on the guards were marks of a hatchet and another imprint of an ugly, sinister-looking hand. A hammer, about 3 lbs. in weight, covered with blood and hair, and lying in one corner, suggested the mode of destruction.

"Well, this licks creation," one of the trio ejaculated, after they had stood for awhile gazing at the scene in silence. "To account for all this blood, I reckon a whole shipful of people must have been slaughtered. But who can have done it, and where are the bodies?"

They looked at one another with awe-stricken faces and continued the search. At every step they took, there were signs of a struggle, deep cuts in the

woodwork of the ship, overturned furniture, smashed crockery, and more and more pools of blood. It was only too evident that the assailant or assailants meeting with some resistance, a tremendous fight had taken place, and that robbery was probably the motive of the crime was also evident, for chests and boxes had been broken open and sundry of their contents were scattered broadcast. But where were the bodies? The three men, though they looked everywhere, could discover neither living nor dead, and at last, satisfied that it was useless to search any more, they proceeded to tow the sloop to shore.

On arriving there they told their story and handed over the *E. A. Johnson* into the custody of the New York Harbour Authorities. News that a horrible massacre had taken place on a Long Island ship then spread like wildfire, and New York papers soon had the most startling headlines, while reporters besieged the quays, seeking tidings of the latest developments.

There was little, however, to tell at first beyond the foregoing discovery. The *E. A. Johnson* had left Key Port on Sunday, March 18, under command of Captain Burr, who had with him a crew of three, two brothers called Watts and a man named Hicks. Burr, who was about thirty-four years of age, was much respected on Long Island, where he was regarded as a man of some means. In addition to being skipper of the *E. A. Johnson*, he also owned her. The two brothers also bore good reputations, but little apparently was known of Hicks. After the *E. A. Johnson* left the port on the date named, nothing was seen or heard of her, till a very early hour on the morning of the 21st, when a schooner collided with

her near Staten Island. She then appeared to be very unmanageable, indeed the accident, fortunately not serious, was entirely due to her erratic behaviour. Only one man was visible on her deck, and the moment the collision occurred he was observed, greatly to the astonishment of those on board the schooner, to run to her bows, where he disappeared. The Captain of the schooner having satisfied himself that neither vessel had incurred any damage went on his way. He thought the behaviour of the *E. A. Johnson* was rather extraordinary, but never for one instant suspected there was anything seriously amiss with her.

About one hour later she was found abandoned as described. What in the meanwhile had become of the man in the bows was a mystery. That is all the information that was forthcoming for some time. Then, suddenly, New York City was thrilled to the core.

For some reason, which the Press either could not or would not divulge, Hicks was suspected all along, and on the police going to his lodgings and finding there Captain Burr's watch, together with other articles belonging to the latter and the Watts brothers, Hicks was charged with murdering all three men. He at once admitted his guilt, but protested that he had been forced to do what he did by the devil, who, he declared, was with him all the time in actual person. His confession was unique and curious to a degree. The following is an extract from it :

“ On the night of March 20, there were five people on board the *E. A. Johnson*—Burr, the Watts brothers, myself and the ‘ devil.’

"It was between 9 and 10 o'clock; one of the Watts brothers was in the bow, when the 'devil' told me to get ready. I seized a heavy instrument and accompanied by the 'devil' crept into the bows. Watts was busily occupied scanning the water in front of the vessel, and the 'devil' and I taking him unawares despatched him with blows on the head."

Continuing, Hicks offered no explanation as to the horrible bloody state of the deck, but proceeded to describe the other two murders. The second Watts and Burr were attacked below deck, and, apparently, the former gave little trouble; but the Captain, Hicks stated, "was a powerful man and fought desperately," which leads one to suppose it was mainly his blood and hair that was scattered so profusely in all directions.

"Finally, however," he added, "we despatched him, the Captain, too, and after leaving the bodies on the deck for about an hour, threw them, one after the other, overboard."

He said nothing about the robbery, but declared he and the "devil" had also been concerned in the mutiny and massacre on board the *Saladin* in 1844. When he was put on his trial, the Court found him guilty, and he was duly executed on July 13, 1860.

The occasion created an enormous sensation in and around New York, and the harbour, partly, perhaps, owing to the presence there of the *E. A. Johnson*, was crowded with craft of every description—yachts, steamers, wherries and fishing boats. It was estimated that at least 10,000 people witnessed the execution; and it has been stated that Hicks died, shrouded in mystery. Whatever the Authorities



may have known about his past, they disclosed practically nothing, and, consequently, the public came to the conclusion that it was impossible to say whether he played any part in the massacre on board the *Saladin* or not. The story of that ill-omened vessel is, in brief, this :

“In February, 1844, the English sailing ship *Saladin* of Newcastle, ran ashore near Halifax, Nova Scotia. The accident showed such extraordinary carelessness or lack of skill on the part of those navigating the vessel that the curiosity of the local authorities was roused, and they at once proceeded to make inquiries. On boarding the vessel the crew informed the authorities that the Captain had died at sea on February 5, the mate three days later, and that two of the crew had fallen overboard.”

This story, together with the untidy, disorderly appearance of the ship, making the authorities suspicious, they searched the vessel, and finding a number of bars of silver and some thousands of dollars in specie, in addition to a valuable cargo, on board her, they came to the conclusion a mutiny had occurred and arrested the crew, placing them in the local prison. In a few days their suspicions were confirmed, for three of the prisoners, Carr, Jones and Galloway, made a statement, the gist of which was as follows : \*

After leaving England all went smoothly on the *Saladin* until she arrived at Valparaiso. There, several of the crew deserted, and among those taken on in their places were Jones, and a man called

\* See *Annual Register*, June 22, 1844.



Fielding and his son. Fielding senior, according to his own story, had been in command of a ship, but for some reason, that he did not clearly explain, the ship had been confiscated by the Chilian Government. The *Saladin* left Valparaiso on February 17, with a crew of fourteen, Captain M'Kenzie commanding, and nothing of any moment occurred for some days. Gradually, however, Fielding worked up a spirit of ill feeling against Captain M'Kenzie, with whom he was continually quarrelling, and about the middle of April persuaded Jones, Anderson, Hazelton and Johnstone to form a conspiracy, not only to murder the Captain, but also the mate and some of the seamen, too. He suggested that if they did this, they might seize the ship, take her to some remote port, and after helping themselves to the valuables on board, abandon her. The four men agreed, and the mutiny was arranged for the morning of Sunday, April 14. Everything seemed to favour their plot. None of their victims, apparently, in the least degree suspected it. When morning dawned on the day appointed for its execution the mate was in the poop, looking calmly about him, in blissful ignorance of his impending fate. One after the other, snakelike and noiseless, the conspirators crawled up behind him, and one of them, suddenly springing up, split his skull asunder with an axe. At Fielding's bidding, the still warm body was at once dropped into the sea, and the murderers went in search of their next victim. He proved to be the ship's carpenter. Seized unawares in the bows he was just thrown overboard, Fielding at once shouting "man overboard," but, needless to say, making no attempt whatever to render him

any assistance. As had been cunningly anticipated the cry brought the Captain out of his cabin, and, as he came running up on deck, he was struck on the head with a hammer and likewise thrown into the sea. The murderers then went below deck in a body and butchered those of their intended victims that remained. When this was done, Fielding drew Jones and Hazelton aside and proposed murdering Carr and Galloway. "There will be all the more plunder for us," he said. Jones and Hazelton, however, refused; they had had enough bloodshed for the time being, and preferred Carr and Galloway to Fielding and his son. Their refusal seemed to have made Fielding suspicious of them, for he surreptitiously threw some of the weapons in the ship overboard, secreting, however, a pair of pistols and a carving knife in his bunk. He then buttonholed Galloway one day and asked the latter to help him murder all the other men on board, saving two, run the ship ashore somewhere, sink her, and abscond with the treasure.

Galloway indignantly refused and promptly disclosed the plot to his mates. Coming to the conclusion that no one's life was safe with a creature like Fielding at large, they seized both him and his son, and after keeping them in suspense for some hours, finally bound their wrists and ankles together, and threw them overboard.

They afterwards divided the money and bars of silver amongst themselves, and made for Cape Breton, intending to scuttle the ship and proceed in the long boat up the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Being misdirected, however, by the Captain of an American

schooner, they got out of their course, and ran aground near Halifax. This was the story told by three of the men found on board the *Saladin*, when she ran ashore. Whether it was true or not is, of course, another question. Probably it was true in part, but only in part. Anyhow all were tried for mutiny and murder, and some were executed.

To return to Hicks. If Hicks stated truly, and he really had taken part in the mutiny on board the *Saladin*, he must have been one of the men arrested and tried at Halifax, although none of them, apparently, bore his name. Could he have been Jones ?

## XIII

### A BEACHY HEAD PROBLEM

ON the morning of April 27, 1863, the fishing smack *Passion* of Colchester, when about twenty-three miles south of Beachy Head, sighted a brigantine in evident distress. The *Passion* at once made for her, and finding she was abandoned and in an almost sinking condition towed her into Dover Harbour. The smacksmen then set to work to pump the water out of her, and when they had at last practically emptied her, they repaired to the hold to inspect her cargo. Here a strange discovery awaited them. On entering, the sight of two planks on the floor fastened down with large spikes, immediately attracted their attention, and, on removing them, they discovered six holes bored in the vessel's bottom. They then noticed in the fo'c'sle that the lashings of the bow port were cut, and that on the walls there appeared to be the marks of a crowbar. But this was not all. Something far grimmer and more hair-raising soon became apparent. All over the interior of the ship, on floor, walls, furniture and ropes, were bloodstains. It was only too evident a terrible drama had been enacted

there. No bodies, however, were to be found, and what added to the mystery was the absence of any papers or other articles likely to lead to the identification of the vessel. There was nothing, saving a small memorandum book with the name "V. T. Holstrum" inscribed in it. This name, however, together with the build and general appearance of the ship, suggested that she was either German or Swedish.

The smacksmen duly reported the case to the local authorities; but the latter failed to discover anything fresh, either about the ship or her crew, so that, in the end, the matter was dropped, and left to swell the ever-increasing number of sea mysteries. That the matter was not followed up may be explained by the fact that the vessel was outside the jurisdiction of British waters when discovered. Yet what was the key to the riddle, the riddle of the ship's abandonment, the disappearance of her crew, the holes that had been bored and subsequently covered in her hold, and the many bloodstains?

In the event, a not improbable one, of the vessel being heavily insured, had someone in the pay of the owner tried to scuttle her, using the two planks to cover up the evidence of his crime? This certainly might have been the case, but why the bloodstains? Was the villain caught in the act, and his captors being about to execute summary justice on him, did he put up a terrible fight for his life before he was eventually overpowered? I have said that the holes in the bottom of the ship may have been covered with the object of concealment, but, on the other hand, they may have been covered in an attempt to prevent the ship sinking. In that case one wonders what

became of those who tried the experiment. Did they realize its futility, and were they drowned in an attempt to leave the ship? At all events nothing was ever heard of the brigantine's captain or crew; presumably, they perished, and the key to the mystery, apparently, has perished with them.



## XIV

### JUMBO AND BOTTLE-OF-BEER

**O**N the morning of August 4, 1834, the brig *Mars* was trying to make progress, by dint of all the canvas she could carry, in a lake-like sea, some 500 miles off the Cameroons. It was a true tropic morning. The sea a pale lilac, glassy, still, and motionless; and the atmosphere full of a kind of steamy whiteness, that made it impossible to tell, when gazing towards the horizon, where the sky ended and the water began. The courses swung to the swell without response to the breathings of the air, while high over the deck the white royals were barely curved, so very slight was the draught.

Yet the vessel moved, and presently there was some stir and life on board her. It was due to the fact that one of the crew perceiving a small object on the water, possibly a mile distant, or some three points, on the starboard bow, had called the Captain, who now stood gazing through his telescope at it, whilst the mate and boatswain, stationed at his side, discussed the nature of it with him.

“What do you make of it, sir?” the mate asked.

“A boat of sorts,” the Captain responded, “and with something rigged up for a sail. I thought at

first it was a raft. There's something moving in her. Looks like a man. Get a boat lowered and row to her."

"Aye, aye, sir," the mate replied, and in a very few minutes the Captain's order was carried out.

The men from the *Mars*, on drawing near to the strange little craft, could see that she contained two niggers; and these men, a minute later, suddenly jumped overboard and tried to swim away. They were soon overtaken, however, and persuaded to get into the boat that had come to their rescue. In their own boat was found a cloak that was being used as a sail, and about two pounds of salt beef; but that was all, there was no water, no anything, in fact, in the shape of a drink. On being taken to the *Mars* and interrogated by her Captain, they said, in broken English, that their names were Jumbo and Bottle-of-Beer, at least that is what white men called them. They added that they had been engaged as boat boys on board the trading ship *Amelia*, but had made their escape from her, because her Captain had threatened to take them to England, and they did not want to leave their own country. They declared that the Captain was asleep on a hen-coop, when they last saw him, which was just as they were making off in the boat. Noticing that Bottle-of-Beer had several cuts on one of his hands and wrists, such as might have been made with a cutlass, and that Jumbo had marks like burns on one of his arms, the Captain of the *Mars* inquired how they came by such wounds, and, in response, Bottle-of-Beer said that he had hurt his hand in lowering the boat, while Jumbo had scalded his several days before with boiling water.

This explanation, however, did not satisfy the Captain of the *Mars*; so he kept the two men under close supervision, and, on arriving in England, reported the matter to the proper authorities. Inquiries as to the *Amelia* were then set on foot, with the result that Jumbo and Bottle-of-Beer were arrested, and on March 6, 1835, tried at the Central Criminal Court before Mr. Justice Vaughan, for piracy and murder on the high seas, it being alleged that on August 15, 1834, they had assaulted Benjamin Glasscock, on board a vessel called the *Amelia*, and inflicted divers and mortal wounds upon the said Glasscock, whereof he died.

The case created a considerable sensation at the time, not only in London but in maritime circles throughout England. It was remarkable for the unsatisfactory manner in which nearly all the witnessess gave their evidence. It would be impossible in this volume to give the trial in full,\* but the testimony of the principal witnessess for the prosecution was, in brief, as follows :

William Ives Stubbs, who had arrived at Liverpool, a prisoner (though he was freed three days after landing), on board the *Richard Rhymer*, the Captain of that vessel not being satisfied with the tale he told, stated he was seaman on board the *Amelia*. When he joined her she was lying in the Cameroon river. She was a barque of some 127 tonnage and traded in ivory and gold dust. Her Captain was Benjamin Glasscock. When he, witness, first came on board her, her crew consisted only of Rourke and Dobie, seamen, like himself, a carpenter, a cooper called

\* For full particulars see *Annual Register*, March, 1835.

Griffiths, and Gould the mate. In addition to these there was a man called Seaman ; but he was not one of the crew. Just before sailing for England, Glasscock engaged a cook and steward called, respectively, Royal and Campigny, and four blacks, two of whom he almost immediately discharged. The two he retained were known as Jumbo and Bottle-of-Beer. They acted as kind of boat boys, and seemed to be quiet and inoffensive. He often, however, heard Glasscock say he intended selling them as slaves.

At midnight, on August 20, when they were about 300 miles from land, he went up on deck to " watch." Bottle-of-Beer was then in the bows, Rourke at the helm, and Glasscock asleep on a hen-coop. At two, he, witness, relieved Rourke at the helm. Half an hour later, while he was looking at the sail, Bottle-of-Beer glided up to him, cutlass in hand, and struck him several times on the head and face. He fell to the deck with his jaw broken. In this position he saw Jumbo approach the sleeping Captain and slash him across the throat. Glasscock uttered no cry. Witness did not see what happened next on deck, as he fell through an open hatchway into the cabin beneath, and lost consciousness. He declared that, on recovering, he saw the aft part of the cabin on fire, and tried to clamber on to the deck, but could not. Eventually he was assisted into the fo'c'sle by Rourke, and afterwards into one of the ship's two boats. He learned the blacks had decamped in the other. In the boat with him were Rourke, Griffiths, Dobie, Gould, Royal, and Campigny.

They rowed continually for seven days and nights, and eventually came to the Bonny river, where they

were taken on board the *Richard Rhymer*, to whose Captain he related all that had occurred. That ended the first part of Stubbs' testimony, but, on his being cross-examined, it transpired that he had by no means told the Court everything. In answer to Counsel's question as to whether the Captain of the *Amelia* always slept on deck in the open, he replied no, not as a rule, and admitted that it was an extremely dangerous thing to do in the Tropics. Next he said, what, apparently, he had forgotten before, that Glasscock, although unable to make a sound—and this, of course, was quite possible—wrestled with Jumbo, a rather extraordinary thing for a man, whose throat was cut, to do. He saw it all happen, he now told the Court, by the light from the binnacle. In response to further questions he admitted he knew Glasscock had valuable property on board, for he had heard him boast of having 3000 ozs. of gold dust with him. He also now stated that a small box was brought out of the *Amelia* and placed in the boat, and broken open by Rourke. The contents were divided. Some, himself included, got £9, and others £6. Asked if it did not strike him, that this was dishonest, he said no, at least not at the time, and that he told the Mayor of Liverpool all about it, when he was examined before him.\*

He went on to say, in answer to further questions, that, in addition to the money, there were two silver watches and a gold chain in the box, and that he gave Dobie and Rourke five shillings each for the valuables.

\* On inquiry it was found that Stubbs had made no mention at all of the matter, when he was examined before the Mayor of Liverpool.



He admitted, again, that there were two muskets and a pistol on board, which the blacks knew about, but could not explain why it was the prisoners had not availed themselves of them. He now declared that, in addition to killing the Captain, Jumbo and Bottle-of-Beer had also killed three of the crew. The steward, he added, died from the effects of a burn. In reply to questions by the Court, he explained he was unable to cry out and warn his mates when he was attacked, because his mouth was full of blood, and he gave as a reason for the blacks leaving the ship their inability to put the ship about and land of themselves.

William Rourke was another witness. His statement, prior to cross-examination, amounted to this :

On being relieved at the helm by Stubbs, he was told by the Captain to heave the lead. Having done this he went forward and sat down with his head towards stern. The Captain was then on the larboard side, and Jumbo and Bottle-of-Beer were both somewhere on deck. Hearing something behind him he turned round, in time to see Stubbs suddenly disappear, and Bottle-of-Beer, who had a cutlass in his hand, occupy his place. He noticed Jumbo, armed with a native battle-axe belonging to the Captain, standing by the side of the latter, who was lying on the deck. More he hadn't time to observe, for Bottle-of-Beer made for him and slashed him on the head. A struggle then ensued, Bottle-of-Beer giving him another blow. But he was able to escape and run to the fo'c'sle, where he informed Dobie, Royal, and Griffiths what had happened. Royal wouldn't believe him, but Dobie seized a sword and



ran up on deck. He, witness, then took an adze from the carpenter's chest and followed Dobie. On reaching the deck he saw one of the prisoners—he thought Bottle-of-Beer—strike Dobie three times, and knock him down the scuttle. Immediately afterwards there was an explosion. Some one then let go the braces of the ship and stopped her way. Witness said hearing a noise at the bulkhead he now broke it down, where it divided the fo'c'sle from the hold, and was thus able to get in immediate touch with Gould. The carpenter and steward were sick in the cabin. Leaving Gould, who went into the scuttle, witness stated he next proceeded on deck and found the ship ablaze on the quarter-deck aft, both below and above, and it appeared to have burned upwards from the cabin. He found the Captain still alive at the starboard side, but so dreadfully cut about that he could scarcely crawl or speak. He managed after a while, however, to gurgle out a few orders and to stagger about, but he soon fell down again. He died about 10 o'clock in the morning. He and some of the other crew succeeded in putting out the fire, and while moving the furniture that had been damaged by the explosion, they found a box. They did not know what it contained, but took it with them on to the deck and put it into one of the ship's boats, as they had decided to abandon the vessel, which was sinking. They rowed to the Bonny river, and witness returned to England on the *Huskerson*, in company with Royal and Griffiths.

In cross-examination Rourke said the night of the mutiny was so clear and fine he could see the two blacks in the boat they stole at a distance of two or

three hundred yards from the ship. He made no mention of the binnacle light. Before leaving the *Amelia*, the blacks, so witness stated, shouted down the hold for the rest of the crew to come up, saying they were going to burn the ship, and shortly afterwards, there was a loud explosion. In direct contradiction to Stubbs, he declared the prisoners were apt to get drunk and unruly, which made the Captain very angry with them, and, as a result, they had, to use his expression, more than once got "started."

The next witness called was John Gould, mate of the *Amelia*, and briefly, what he told the Court was this :

On the night of the mutiny he heard a cry of murder, and directly afterwards saw Stubbs fall through the scuttle, badly wounded on the head. He, witness, then seized a cutlass and rushed up on deck. There he was attacked by Jumbo, who was armed with a battle-axe. He succeeded in wounding the black on his wrist, side, and legs, but was knocked down the companion ladder. While there, he thought he heard the Captain trying to speak. The latter, he said, subsequently fell through the scuttle, and, in so doing, knocked over a lamp, with the result that three powder barrels exploded. This was the cause of the explosion previously alluded to. Continuing his evidence he said he did not see the prisoners in the boat, and Stubbs, who climbed up the rigging, never mentioned seeing them either. While he took charge of the helm, Royal tried to stitch up the Captain's throat, which, he said, had been "cut from ear to ear." The steward, he said, who was ill at the time, died from burns. He, furthermore, stated that they

had to leave the ship because she was sinking, and added that he worked his passage home afterwards in the brig *Ida*.

In cross-examination Gould persisted that Jumbo was armed with a battle-axe when he struck him, although it was discovered, on referring to depositions taken by the crew on the Bonny river, that he had then said the weapon was a case knife. He now stated he had ordered three muskets to be loaded, and made the admission that in the August preceding the mutiny there had been a quarrel at Fernando Po between Captain Glasscock and the white crew of the *Amelia*, of which he was one, and, furthermore, admitted that there had been other quarrels, too. He said that, when the contents of the box was divided, he got the Captain's breast pin, a fact he did not mention at his examination at Liverpool, for fear he might be suspected of having had a hand in Glasscock's murder.

He corroborated Stubbs' statement that the prisoners were "very quiet" men.

Henry Dobie, on being summoned to the witness box, was found to be too ill and weak to give evidence—his face was dreadfully disfigured by a cut—and, consequently, John Royal was called on instead. Most of what he said, was more or less in agreement with the evidence of the previous witness, saving that in his cross-examination he declared Stubbs had not the strength to climb the rigging as Gould had stated. In referring to Glasscock, he mentioned something quite new, namely, that the Captain had been burned as well as wounded, but made the somewhat startling admission that he believed that,

in spite of these injuries, viz., the cutting of his throat from ear to ear and the burns, to say nothing of the effects of the fall through the scuttle on to the lamp beneath, the deceased might have been able to ascend, unassisted, the companion ladder. He, furthermore, informed the Court that the Captain was kinder to the blacks than he was to the whites. This practically concluded his evidence.

There was nothing in the testimony of the other witnesses deserving of comment. William Griffiths, for instance, repeated, with trifling variations, what the others had stated, and Richard Carius Oldfield, surgeon on the *Mars*, testified to the finding at sea of the boat with the blacks prisoners in it.

This ended the case for the prosecution. For the defence there were no witnesses. And now something happened that, assuredly, was very unusual in the annals of our Courts of Law. Despite the fact that, apparently, the case was going entirely against the prisoners, they had obviously enlisted the sympathy of the Court, and it was, one felt, entirely on their side. There was something, perhaps, in the manner in which the white crew gave their evidence, apart from the various contradictions and discrepancies in it, that created a singularly unfavourable impression; and this, of course, was greatly in the prisoners' favour. When, therefore, in response to the judge, who asked them if they had anything to say, they extended their clasped hands, and, with an earnest look of what appeared to be genuine simplicity, exclaimed, "Not true, not true; all lies, very much lies," the sympathy on their behalf manifestly deepened very considerably. Hence

no one, no one at any rate who was present at the trial, was altogether surprised when the jury returned the verdict of "Not guilty."

In summing up, Mr. Justice Vaughan said that, undoubtedly, a foul murder had been perpetrated on board the *Amelia*, but, he added, in spite of the unusual amount of evidence given, or, perhaps, because of it, the difficulty of fixing the guilt on any person or persons had proved to be wholly unsurmountable.

The mystery is still unsolved.

## XV

### A CHINESE PUZZLE

IN 1860, a year of many crimes, a strange case occurring at sea was reported in the English Press.\* On the morning of March 21 Captain Webb, of the U.S.A. schooner *Thomas E. French*, when about four miles north of Barnegat, perceived, a point or two away, a yawl with apparently one man on board. Struck by a peculiar something about the boat, a something that was extremely difficult to analyse, Webb made for her, and, when near enough to see her distinctly with the naked eye, found that what his glasses had told him was correct, there was only one man in her, and that man a Chinaman. He was not one of the dirty, shabby order of Chinamen that one usually sees in the Chinese quarter of New York, oh dear, no. He was just the reverse. He was a sleek, dapper little fellow, dressed like a European, and spick and span all over. Webb eyed him curiously, and, as it was by no means a usual thing to find a man of his colour and nationality in possession of a boat in American waters, questioned him closely. The Chink did not evade, or appear in the least degree disconcerted. He

\* *Vide*, for example, *News of the World*, April 15, 1860.



told his tale quite imperturbably, and with a bland and smiling face, that never varied.

He said he was the sole survivor of the sloop *Spray* of Guildford, Connecticut. He had left New York on the 15th instant as cook on that vessel, and there were on board her, besides himself, only Captain Leete and the latter's brother. It was not until they had been at sea, cruising about Newark Bay and its vicinity for some days, that anything happened. They then collided with the sloop *Lucinda* of Rockaway. The *Lucinda* made off without waiting to see what damage she had done. Probably, he added, she was badly damaged herself, and the *Spray* sank in about fifteen minutes. The Leetes, who were below deck, presumably looking after their possessions, were both drowned, and he would, probably, have shared their fate, but for a stroke of luck. The *Spray's* boat, which had not been damaged in the collision, floated off her, and he succeeded in getting into it. There was nothing more to tell, nothing of any moment, till the advent of the *Thomas E. French*.

"Are you quite sure you are telling the truth?" Captain Webb asked, trying to read the Chink's yellow face, and, of course, failing dismally. "Whose coat is that you're wearing? Chinamen don't make enough as a rule to buy coats like that." And he ran his fingers suspiciously over the Chink's slick seafaring jacket, as he spoke.

"No, it was Captain Leete's," the Chink responded, quite coolly and in good English. "I found it in the boat when I got into her. The Captain and his brother used to keep all sorts of things in her."

"So I see," Webb ejaculated, peering into the boat and seeing a ship's compass, hatchet and a box of provisions lying on the boards in the bows. "I suppose they kept those things there, too!" and he nodded in the direction of the articles.

"Yes, sir," the Chink replied. "I found them just beside the coat."

"Sounds like a damned lie," Webb commented, "and, mebbe, it is. Anyhow, you just come along with us and spin your yarn to the authorities ashore, sabbee."

The Chink nodded, and obeying a peremptory signal from the Captain, he scrambled out of the *Spray's* yawl and on to the deck of the *Thomas E. French*, that was heaving and tossing close alongside her. The *Thomas E. French*, with the yawl in tow, then made for Little Egg Harbour, and on arriving there, Webb promptly conducted the Chink to the harbour authorities.

Now it transpired that, some time prior to this, the *Lucinda* had put in the harbour much damaged, and her Captain had told the authorities a somewhat strange tale. He said that, when in the vicinity of New York Bay, he had been run into by the sloop *Spray*, which was apparently not answering her helm and behaving in an altogether remarkable manner. The only person to be seen on her deck, which the *Lucinda's* captain noticed was strewn with bedding, flags and furniture of all kinds, was a Chinaman, who appeared to be quite calm and collected, and resolutely refused assistance. The Captain of the *Lucinda*, fearing for the safety of his vessel, was compelled to draw off immediately, and make for shore at top speed.

This was the *Lucinda's* tale, and the harbour authorities were still discussing it among themselves, when Webb turned up with the Chinaman. Then they told their respective tales, and the authorities weighed them over, too, and after closely interrogating the Chinaman, who contradicted himself several times, but remained as smiling and imperturbable as ever, let him go.

A few days later New York experienced a thrill. The receding tide was found to have left on the sandy shore on the south end of Battery a sloop with a big hole in her larboard bow. She proved to be the *Spray*, and when the local harbour authorities had her examined, a very sensational discovery was made. One of the men employed on the examination, thinking to rescue some of the goods, thrust a boat-hook into the cabin, and, on pulling it out, found that he had hooked a sheet saturated with blood. The suspicions of the men being then aroused, they explored the vessel thoroughly, and found blood everywhere. Clothing, furniture, and boards were soaked with it. There were no bodies, however. Convinced that foul play had taken place on board the ship, they at once reported the case to their employers, and inquiries were forthwith set on foot. They elicited little, but that little was curious. It was ascertained that a Chinaman, known in New York as John Low or Jackalow, had sailed continually with Captain Leete and his brother in the capacity of cook and general factotum for four years. He then stole some money from the brothers and ran away; but was finally caught by the police. Jackalow, however, came out top, owing, apparently, to the influence he

had acquired over the Leetes, who, completely fascinated by him, not only refused to press the case, but took him back, and made more of him than ever. Now despite his bland and smiling face, rumour said that Jackalow was very revengeful and had a terrible temper when once roused. Hence it was thought by some that he had quarrelled with his employers, and had, in revenge, drugged their food and then murdered them, taking advantage of the foggy weather on the morning of the 16th instant, to drop their bodies overboard. The Captain of the *Gem* stated they were alive and well on the 15th, because he saw them in Newark Bay on that date; after that date they were never seen again. Presuming, then, the crime to have been committed in New York Bay, Jackalow must have steered the yawl single handed through Hell Gate, and how he managed to do so, and to pass Sandy Hook and get away down to Barnegat, without attracting attention, was, indeed, remarkable. As soon as the authorities decided he had committed the murders, a hue and cry for him was immediately raised, but he was nowhere to be found, despite the constant vigilance of the police, who never gave up hoping that they would sooner or later get on his track. It may be that, seized with remorse for his evil deed, he did away with himself by way of atonement, though this is, of course, merely a charitable surmise. What really became of him has remained a mystery to this day.

## XVI

### THE SHIP OF STRANGE SMELLS

ONE morning in January, 1811,\* the Privateer *Tarantula*, while cruising off Cape Finisterre in search of French prey, spied a big vessel several points away. Scenting plunder, the Privateersman at once altered her course, and making for the stranger, cleared her decks and got her guns ready. She soon, however, experienced a disappointment, for on approaching nearer to the stranger, the latter was seen to be, judging from her build, an American ship, and, on a still nearer approach, the *Orion*. But that was not all. She was in a most deplorable condition. Her masts were gone, her boats were missing, her bulwarks were hopelessly damaged, and she was partially, at all events, waterlogged. Impelled, however, by a strange curiosity, the Captain of the *Tarantula* sent one of his boats to board her. The men speedily returned, looking deathly and retching. They said that on boarding the *Orion* and peeping down her companion hatchway, they saw a man lying at the foot of the ladder. Wondering what had happened to him, whether he was alive or dead, they were about to

\* *Vide Annual Register*, January, 1811.

descend, when they were assailed by a smell so horrible that they dare not go any further. They could only suppose it came from a ship full of dead, for no single body could possibly have caused it. The Captain of the *Tarantula*, though feeling certain something terrible had happened on board the ship, and curious to find out, if possible, what it was, had not the heart to send his men back, nor the stomach to go himself, and so the mystery remained a mystery, for the *Orion* was never heard of again.



## XVII

### THE STOWAWAY

**A**NOTHER unsolved sea mystery occurred in the summer of 1863. The *Result*, one of Messrs. Green's fine Australian vessels, arrived one day in the Port of London from over seas, and dropped anchor, prior to discharging her passengers and cargo. The moment the former and their effects had been landed, the unloading of the goods stowed away in the hold began.

Off came hatches and down into the hold went the men, shouting, swearing, and hustling, and soon the work of hauling up casks, crates, bales, and packages of all sorts, to be conveyed by cranes or on backs ashore, was in full swing.

Suddenly, one of those engaged in roping boxes in the hold, paused, and shouting to the man working next to him to look, pointed excitedly in the direction of two huge piles of goods immediately in front of him.

"What's the matter, Jim?" his mate said cautiously, thinking he had suddenly gone mad.

"Matter," the man replied with an oath, "why look there," and he pointed again in the same direction more emphatically even than before.

His mate, somewhat reassured, looked, and then suddenly became excited, too; for there, in the semi-darkness, standing upright between the packages, was a man.

"Blimey!" the unloader who had first spoken exclaimed. "Can't you see 'im? 'e's a stowaway. 'Ere, come out of it," he went on, addressing the man in not at all unkindly tones, for among the poor there is generally much sympathy, "come out of it. You're in Lunnun now, and if you sneak ashore at once, no one will see you."

But the man apparently did not hear, for he made no reply, and did not move. Then Jim's mate said he would see what he could do, and approaching as near to the stowaway as he could, he told him to get out of the hold the way he had got in, and to leave the ship, whilst he had the chance. But still there was no reply, and the two men looked first at one another, and then at the stranger, in utter amazement.

"What's up?" a voice from above shouted authoritatively. "What's up below there?"

"Nothing," Jim called back, somewhat hesitatingly, "leastways, nothing very much."

"What do you mean by nothing very much?" the voice from above shouted again. "What's up, I say?"

The men now stared anxiously at the figure between the boxes. There was no time to lose.

"Come, move out of there," Jim called out softly. "Don't you 'ear me? Move, I say, or some one will be down from the deck, as 'll make yer."

It was of no use, however, the threat had no effect,

and the man remained where he was, apparently without changing a hair.

"Come, what is it?" the voice from above now shouted furiously. "If there's nothing the matter get on with your work. I can't have this job hanging about till Christmas!"

"There's no 'elp for it," Jim whispered. "We shall 'ave to give the cove away; 'e must be stone deaf or an imbecile. Some one's down 'ere, sir," he shouted.

"What the devil do you mean?" was the angry retort. "I've had enough of all this nonsense. I shall have to settle it once and for all." And the owner of the voice, swinging himself down the companion ladder in a fury, approached the unloaders with an oath upon his lips. He changed his tune, however, when he caught sight of the man wedged in amongst the boxes.

"Hullo, that's a landsman, judging by his clothes, a stowaway, for a dead cert. I shall run him in. Now then," he continued, addressing the unloaders, "don't stand there like dummies. Move the packages away and get at him."

"Aye, aye, sir," Jim and his mate responded in chorus, and aided by another man, who had just arrived upon the scene, they at once set to work. But they had hardly commenced to remove the boxes, that, apparently, were hedging the man in, when suddenly he staggered forward and fell with a curious sideways movement on to the boards. The stowaway was no live man but a mummified corpse.

\* \* \* \* \*

The remains were never identified, and owing

to the advanced stage of their decomposition, the cause of death could not be ascertained. Hence, although it was supposed at the time that they were the remains of some unfortunate stowaway, there always remains the possibility that they were not. A passenger exploring the hold out of curiosity might have been suffocated there ; or, supposing a murder had been committed (and this theory also was mooted at the inquest), what safer place of concealment than the hold of a ship !

## XVIII

### WAS THERE A WOMAN IN THE CASE ?

**I**N the early summer of 1825 \* a boat containing a solitary man was picked up in South Australian waters. His story was a strange one. He said that in 1823 he formed one of a party of sailors who were out on a sealing expedition in Bass's Straits. The ship, they were in, anchoring off a lonely part of the coast † one day, they went ashore, and in the course of their wanderings met a native girl, who so fascinated their leader that he persuaded her to go back with them.

Her presence on the ship, apparently, pleased everybody. Sailors, perhaps, more than most men, are susceptible to the charms of women, and, after a while, the men began to think it would be nice if they, as well as their leader, had one of the fair sex to consort with. Consequently they took the fair maiden into their confidence, with the result that she promised to decoy some of her girl friends on board the vessel, if the sailors would land her, one day, near the spot where they had found her. This they

\* See *Annual Register*, May, 1825.

† Name of country, whether Australia or Tasmania, not given in above.

agreed to do, and one day, presumably with their leader's permission, they took the girl ashore.

She stayed away for three days, and then suddenly returned, with the welcome tidings that she expected some of her girl friends to join them shortly.

That same night, after her return, while all the men were sleeping soundly, the native girl hid the only musket they had, and then, stealing on deck, made a curious sound. It was at once answered from the shore, and in a few minutes a crowd of natives, armed to the teeth, clambered up the vessel's sides and dropped on deck.

All saving the narrator of the story, who succeeded in lowering a boat and escaping in it, were barbarously murdered, the girl herself joining in the slaughter. No evidence, of course, could be obtained in support of this story, and one wonders whether there really was a woman in the case, or whether the man picked up in the boat invented it all, to cloak some crime or crimes of his own. There were strange men amongst the whites in Australia in those days, and, possibly, the man in question was one of them.



## XIX

### THE MURDER ON THE "GLOBE"

ONE bright morning in July, 1856, when H.M. Gunboat *Recruit* was lying at anchor off the Turkish coast in the Black Sea, about forty miles from the Bosphorus, the look-out man in her bows suddenly communicated with the officer on deck and directed his attention to a boat containing several men, that, at some little distance from the ship, could be seen gliding swiftly through the water. There was certainly something curious about the boat, though what the officer could not exactly say, and straightway he informed the commander, who immediately dispatched a boat from the *Recruit* in chase of her.

Little by little the man-of-war's crew gained on the strange boat, and when they were close to her, two out of the five swarthy-looking foreigners in her jumped into the sea, and made for the shore opposite. Not troubling about them, the British sailors rowed after the boat, and boarding her, brought her and her three remaining crew back with them to the *Recruit*.

On being questioned by the commander of the *Recruit* they said they were Guiseppe Legava, Giovanna Barbalano and Matteo Pettrick, Italian

subjects. The account they gave of themselves proving far from satisfactory, their interrogator had them searched, and on finding firearms and money in their possession, he at once arrested them, and took them to Constantinople.

The next stage in the drama was their trial at the Winchester Assizes for the murder of Joseph Pattinson.\*

The story of the crime may best be told as unfolded by the witnesses.

George Nelegan, on being put into the witness box, said that on July 4, 1856, he was boy on board the *Globe*, an English merchant ship. In addition to the three prisoners and himself, there were on the vessel at that time John Scotland, who was Captain, the mate, Evan Evans, Joseph Pattinson, Daniel Cullen, Dave Thomas, Angelo and "Black Jack," or twelve in all, of whom seven were British and five Italian. On the night of the 4th, he, Nelegan, was on watch from 8 to 12. When he left the deck at midnight all was well. He got into his bunk at about 12.30. Close to him, on the port side of the vessel, were Pattinson and Thomas, whom he believed to be sound asleep. After he had been in bed some time, he suddenly perceived a dim light, and, on peering over the side of the bunk to see what it was, he saw two men creeping on all fours along the passage leading into the fo'c'sle where he was, carrying lighted candles. On reaching the fo'c'sle one of them blew his candle out, and, setting it down, crept up to the bunk occupied by Pattinson. Witness, who was very frightened, did not notice what

\* *Annual Register*, July, 1856.

happened next, but he heard a strange noise and a groan. The two men then sat down, close to him, for a short time, and afterwards clambered up on deck through the fo'c'sle hatchway. Witness got out of his bunk and tried to follow them, but Barbalano, who had a knife in his hand, saw him, and slammed the hatch down in his, witness's, face, so sharply that witness, who had hold of the coaming of the hatch, was forced to let go at once and drop. He fell into a hammock, and, on scrambling out of it, he saw Thomas holding his hand to his neck, and Pattinson lying on the floor with his throat cut—dead. Soon after this Pettrick and Barbalano came down into the hold again. Thomas at once hid, but before witness could do so, the two Italians had seen him. They were both armed. Instead of harming him, however, as he had anticipated, Pettrick kissed one of his hands and said, "Me no touch you." They then left him. Shortly after this the mate called out from the deck above, and on witness rushing up to ascertain what was happening, he saw the five Italians in a boat rowing away from the ship as hard as possible. That terminated his evidence.

Dave Thomas was the next witness to go into the box. He said that, when he was on the *Globe*, his bunk in the fo'c'sle was immediately under that of Pattinson. He went on to state that on the night of July 4 he was awakened by an awful scream, and, on opening his eyes, he saw "Black Jack" and another man, whom he couldn't see properly, standing by his side with lighted candles. The moment they saw him gazing at them, "Black Jack" stabbed him in the neck, and, presumably, thinking him dead, proceeded to

murder Pattinson, who shot out of his bunk past him, witness, on to the floor. The murderers stayed for a little while in the fo'c'sle, and then left. Directly they had gone witness hid.

John Cullen next gave evidence. He said that at midnight on July 5 he took his turn at the wheel. Some time afterwards Evans came running after him and told him to go into the fo'c'sle at once, as the foreigners were murdering the men there. Before he had time to do so, however, Legava appeared on the scene and shot him. He was sure it was Legava because there was no one else near at the time. He fell wounded and was carried by the Captain to the cabin. That was all he had to say.

John Scotland, the Captain of the *Globe*, told the Court rather more. He said that on the night of July 4, for some reason or another, he couldn't sleep. At about 3.30 the mate came into his cabin to know the time, and immediately afterwards they heard pistol shots. Running together on deck, they saw a strange sight. Evans and Cullen were lying wounded, while Legava and Angelo were standing by them, armed with pistols. Directly witness and the mate appeared, Legava and Angelo fired at them and then retired. Witness and the mate carried the two wounded men to the cabin, and armed themselves as best they could. Soon afterwards the mutineers came in a body to the cabin and demanded money. Witness gave them five pounds, and on them asking for more, he handed them over his watch and allowed them to search the cabin. They then went up on deck without attempting to do either witness or the mate any injury, and soon after left the ship. Further

evidence of a minor description was given, and the case for the prosecution then ended.

For the defence the prisoners' counsel pointed out various discrepancies in the English crew's testimony and declared there was no evidence whatever that the prisoners were guilty of murder. One witness had stated positively that it was "Black Jack," one of those who had escaped, who had killed Pattinson, and it was quite likely the man with him, when he committed the murder, was Angelo, the other foreigner who had escaped. He had not been identified. When the defending counsel had concluded his speech, the sympathy of those present was very much with the prisoners, and it was still more so when the prisoners, in response to the judge's question as to whether they had anything to say, emphatically declared their innocence. Great, therefore, was the surprise, when the jury returned a verdict of guilty against all three men, and they were duly condemned to death.

The crowd assembled in front of Winchester jail (it was in the days when executions took place in public) to see them hanged was unusually large. According to the official report of what took place, the prisoners admitted their guilt, and the crowd, who demonstrated loudly on their behalf, mistook their exclamations of penitence on the scaffold for protestations of innocence. But was the official report true? Is it not possible that the prisoners did not really confess, or that the confession was made for them, and a false report circulated, with the object of satisfying those who did not believe them to be guilty?

I believe it is known that instances of this kind have occasionally occurred. But, however that may be, in this case public opinion was entirely in sympathy with the condemned, and I for one think that the judgment of the British public, guided by their heart and instinct, seldom errs.



## XX

### BURIED ALIVE

ONE Friday afternoon, in the summer of 1821, two small boys climbed over the wall of Selskar churchyard in Wexford in search of birds' eggs.

After looking around for some time without any luck they approached a tree overhanging a newly made grave, and thinking there might be a nest there, one of them immediately climbed up it. The boy who remained below stood upon the grave, and a few moments later heard curious sounds just under his feet. The effect was electrical, he gave a yell and bolted, and his friend, promptly tumbling out of the tree, followed suit. Away they ran, helter skelter, to the town, telling every one they met what had happened.

As a result, crowds of people, sceptical and otherwise, hastened to the churchyard and the coffin was speedily dug up. When the lid was removed a terrible spectacle presented itself. The body in it, that of a man, did not lie at full length as corpses usually lie; it was in a huddled up position, and the limbs were contracted as much as the cramped space would allow. The nose obviously had been

flattened against the lid of the coffin, and the expression on the man's face was one of indescribable horror.

Several local doctors who were present pronounced the man dead, but when a barber, bending over the man, cut his chin with a razor and blood flowed, the crowd took this as a sign that, if the man really were dead, he was, at all events, only just dead. Hence, one and all clamoured for an inquest. Well, the inquest was held, and at it a strange story was unfolded. The dead man, for whether he was living or not at the hour the grave was opened, he was certainly dead now, was called Stephen Evans. He had been a hand on board the *Harriot*, a Milford vessel, lying alongside the Wexford Custom House Quay; and according to the testimony of those on board her, he went ashore one day and drank some raw spirits at a public-house in the town, after which he returned to his ship and lay in his hammock. On his not replying to his companions, when addressed, they examined him, and because there did not seem to be any indications of life, saving a slight perspiration, they deemed him dead, and without calling in a doctor put him in a coffin. After keeping him for some days in the hold of the ship, they had him, incredible as it may seem, buried in Selskar churchyard, having, of course, first obtained the consent of the Vicar of the parish.

Some local men, as was the custom at that time, when body-snatching was so prevalent, watched in the churchyard on the night of the burial, but they heard nothing to warrant them in supposing that Stephen was not dead.

However, the noises heard subsequently by the two boys, combined with the appearance of the unfortunate man's body, strongly suggested, if it did not actually prove, that Evans, in very deed, had been buried alive.

Great, therefore, was every one's astonishment, when the jury returned the verdict, "Died by the visitation of God." Not a word of censure was passed upon those whose obvious duty it was to have called in a doctor, and who had not done so; nor upon the parson for permitting the burial of a stranger in his churchyard, without having first obtained full particulars of the manner of that stranger's death. Not to have inquired more thoroughly into an affair of this nature was an almost unprecedented proceeding; but so it was, questions were not invited, and the matter was hushed up. It was, indeed, strange, for supposing even that there had been no question of a premature burial, in view of the fact that no doctor had been called in, one was more than justified in assuming that the man had not died a natural death.

In fact, the theory that he had been murdered, though it was not put forward at the inquest, seems to me by far the more feasible. A quarrel between Evans and his mates, with whom, as well as with the Captain, he may have been extremely unpopular, might well have resulted in a plot to make him dead drunk (or to drug him), and either to take his life, or bury him, while he was still in that condition. As the annals of the Mercantile Marine of all nations amply testify, sailors in those hard days were often devils, devils far more often than sheer fools. Besides,

certain of those on shore, for example, the publican at whose house Evans took his fatal glass, may have been involved, and who can say that there was not a woman in the case too ?

At all events, the story as unfolded at the inquest,\* suggested almost endless possibilities.

\* *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1821.

## XXI

### THE MAN IN THE HAMPER

ON a certain Tuesday in January, 1815, two poorly dressed men drove up to Down's Wharf, Thames side, and asked Mr. Toss, clerk in the warehouse there, if the Leith smack, *Mary Ann*, would sail thence to Scotland. On being answered in the affirmative, they went to a public-house near by, and, after a while, returned to the warehouse with a hamper. They informed Mr. Toss their name was Chapman, and said they wished to send the hamper to Edinburgh. Mr. Toss told them what the booking fee was, and they paid it and drove off. As soon as they had gone, Mr. Toss looked at the label on the hamper, and saw it was directed to Mr. Wilson, Janitor, College, Edinburgh. Everything being, as he thought, in order, he pushed the hamper under cover, and thought no more of the matter. On the ensuing Friday the *Mary Ann* arrived, and the hamper was then carried on board her. The moment it was set down, one of the crew noticed a very unpleasant smell proceeding from it.

Thinking something in it must have gone bad, he turned it round to examine it more closely, and

as he did so, a human hand suddenly came through the basket work, which was apparently rotten.

Much alarmed, the sailor at once told his mates, and, as a result, the parish beadle was sent for. When the beadle came he at once opened the basket and discovered inside it the doubled up and much mutilated body of a man. Body-snatching being very common just then, the beadle wondered if it was the work of Resurrectionists, as pliers of that abominable trade were styled. Careful examination of the remains by the doctor, however, negatived that theory, and an inquest \* being held at St. Andrew's Head, Upper East Smithfield, a verdict of "Wilful Murder against a person or persons unknown" was returned. One would have thought that with so much to go on, Mr. Toss's description, for instance, of the men who brought the hamper, and the handwriting on the label, the work of tracing the culprits would not have been so very difficult, but it was, apparently, quite beyond the powers of the London police. Not only were the men who brought the hamper never found, but the body inside it was never identified, and the affair was thus left a mystery.

There were, of course, all kinds of theories; while some still adhered to the idea of Resurrectionists, others thought the man was a French spy, some one in the secret service of Napoleon, and that the British Government wanted the affair to remain, as far as the public were concerned, a mystery; and others, again, that it was simply a case of robbery and murder. No one, however, could explain the

\* *Annual Register*, January, 1815.



sending of the hamper to Scotland. The address given was, apparently, either a mere blind or the wrong one, it certainly led to no light being thrown on the mystery; but why, if it were a murder, all that trouble, when it was so easy to pop the body right away in the river? .



PART IV  
FOUND BY THE SEA



## XXII

### THE GREAT RAMSGATE MYSTERY

**A**T six o'clock on the morning of April 11, 1859, the coastguard, who was on duty on the East Cliff near Dumpton Stairs, close to Ramsgate, noticed a boat lying on the beach with the tide washing it. Wondering where it could have come from, and what had become of its occupants, he at once descended the Stairs and secured it. That done, he turned, and was about to retrace his steps, when he perceived, about forty yards away and close under the cliff, a naked body lying half in and half out of the water. On examining it, he discovered it to be the body of a man. There was a deep wound over the heart, while the left hand was missing. It had evidently been hacked right off. Suspecting foul play, the coastguard now searched around carefully, and presently alighted on a coat, waist-coat, trousers, and flannel shirt, minus one wristband, in a heap about ten yards from the body. There was no cut on any of them to correspond with the stab over the heart. A few yards further on was a hatchet, the handle of which appeared to have been shortened and the blade sharpened ; and a few yards further on again was a hand with the four fingers missing.

Convinced now that a dreadful crime had been committed, the coastguard informed the police, and the affair was at once investigated. One doctor, who examined the body, came to the conclusion that the deceased had actually died from the effects of a stab, which had passed through the chest, left lung, and left ventricle of the heart. The fact that the wound was larger internally than externally suggested, he said, that whoever dealt the blow had moved the weapon backwards and forwards, to make the incision wider. The man had not fallen over the cliff, nor been washed in by the tide; he had met his end either in the boat or on the beach. A porter belonging to a hotel in Ramsgate, on seeing the body, identified it as that of a foreigner, whom he had thought to be either German or Dutch, and who came to the hotel on the previous Saturday evening. He had with him a carpet bag, portmanteau, and umbrella, was wearing very remarkable high boots, and had his left hand bandaged; and was thought, so the porter stated, to be very well-to-do, as he had a gold watch and chain, a signet ring, and a considerable sum of money, probably £40 or £50, in his possession. He went away in the morning. That was practically all the porter knew about him. Some one else, however, declared they had seen some one very like him walking along the East Cliff, at 8 o'clock on Sunday evening, but with no bag or umbrella. This latter statement, coupled with the report of the doctor, led to a general belief that the deceased had been murdered, most probably for his valuables. Great, therefore, was the astonishment of the general public at what followed. Police



inquiries, it was stated in the Press, led to the movements of the deceased being traced thus. He arrived at Southampton from America sometime either at the beginning or middle of March, 1856. On March 31 he left Southampton for London, where he stayed till April 7. On the latter date he left London for Dover; some one recollected seeing a man answering to his description, with his left hand bandaged and wearing curious high boots, in the Dover train. Arriving at Dover he bought a hatchet and asked the shopman to shorten the handle. That was on a Friday. The following day he went to Ramsgate, and on getting out at the station he at once had his moustache and beard shaved. Then he put up at the hotel already referred to.

On leaving the hotel the following day he went to Margate, dined there between 11 and 12, and soon after was seen to enter the railway station, bag in hand. He returned to Ramsgate and, as has been said, was last seen on the cliff there at about 8 p.m.

At half-past eleven on the morning of the following day, that is to say Monday, some one found at the corner of Royal Crescent Wall two shirts, two collars, and various other articles—the shirts were exactly like the one discovered on the beach—while later on, in the afternoon, a boatman picked up, at sea, a carpet bag. It was wide open and empty. Furthermore, some letters were discovered on the beach, close to the spot where the body had been found, and these were thought to prove that the deceased was a Dutchman called Matterig. That is all that at the inquest was stated to have been found out about the deceased.

And now comes the surprise. Despite the nature of the wounds, the hacking off of the fingers and a hand, the stab in the heart and the wrenching to and fro of the knife, the jury wavered. While some still held that deceased had been murdered, others were actually of the opinion he had committed suicide, and so an open verdict was returned, and the case abandoned. But could any theory of suicide have been more untenable? Was it, I ask, humanly possible for any man to have killed himself in the manner it was proved that this man had been killed? Besides, would any man who intended to commit suicide have taken so much trouble in the way of preparation. Would he, as it was suggested had been done in the present instance, have hired a boat (by the way, the owner of the boat was never found), rowed to the beach below the East Cliff, undressed, cut off the tops of his long boots (they were found on the beach in this condition), picked all the marks likely to lead to identification from his clothes, and then have thrown them, presumably with his money, into the sea, and before proceeding to accomplish his purpose, namely suicide, have cut off the fingers of his left hand, then the left hand itself, and finally have stabbed himself to the heart, making the wound bigger by wrenching the knife backwards and forwards in it? It was, apparently, true that the foreigner had himself bought the hatchet that was found beside his body; but notwithstanding this fact, which, it must be remembered, proves nothing with regard to the suicide theory, it is hardly possible to conceive a clearer case of murder.

## XXIII

### A SUNDERLAND TRAGEDY

ON June 13, 1839, Police-Sergeant Ben Rowe perceived a human body lying half in and half out of the water on a sand shoal, near a bridge, at Sunderland. On hauling it ashore and examining it he found it to be that of a middle-aged man. It was clad in a flannel shirt and stockings. Round its neck was a rope with a big stone attached to one end of it, and on its head were several very ugly wounds.

It was undoubtedly a case of murder. At least so the police-sergeant concluded, and he immediately went for Mr. William Dodd, a local surgeon. Mr. Dodd, on examining the body, was of the opinion that death was due to the wounds on the head, the skull was literally smashed in, but what struck him as very singular was the appearance of the lips; though the man must have been dead some time they were quite "fresh and life-like." \*

The case being pronounced to be one of foul play, inquiries were set on foot, with the result the body was identified as that of John Frederick Bergholtz, a

\* See *Annual Register*, July, 1839.

Prussian, and Captain of the *Phœnix*, a small sailing vessel, trading between Sunderland and Prussia.

The next step in the drama was the joint arrest of Jacob Frederick Ehlert, mate of the *Phœnix*, and Muller, second apprentice in the same vessel. Then Muller turned King's evidence, and this led to Ehlert being tried alone at the Durham Assizes, charged with the wilful murder of Captain John Frederick Berg-holtz in the parish of Monkwearmouth on June 13, 1839.

Muller was the principal witness. He said that on June 13, 1839, he was second apprentice on board the *Phœnix*, which lay moored alongside the Sunderland quay. He went on watch, as usual, between 12 and 2 a.m., and while he was thus engaged, prisoner came to him and asked him to go below deck with him and have a drink. Muller acquiesced, and prisoner gave him some spirits. He then told him to take off his shoes and come along with him to the Captain's cabin. Witness again obeyed, and followed prisoner, who carried in one hand a lantern, and in the other a maaker, with which he used to beat salt fish tender. On reaching the cabin prisoner went up to the Captain, who lay asleep on the larboard side of the vessel, and shining the light full on him, struck him a violent blow on the head with the maaker. Witness expostulated, but prisoner took no notice. He fastened a rope round the Captain's neck and dragged him out of his bunk on to the floor. He then threatened to kill witness, unless he helped him, offering him at the same time three hundred pounds if he would do so. Witness, not daring to refuse, took the money prisoner gave him and helped him drag

the body of the Captain through a skylight on to the deck, and heave him overboard. He was then forced by prisoner to get into a boat with him and help him tow the body along in the direction of the bridge over the river. On getting close to the bridge he assisted prisoner sink the body in about the middle of the river. That done, he was compelled to row prisoner back to the ship. Witness now wanted to ask the cook to go on watch, as it was his turn, but the prisoner would not let him, and he had to resume his vigil, the prisoner going below deck. After awhile he came up again, and instructed witness to tell anyone who inquired about the Captain that he, witness, had rowed him ashore, and, if they asked what the Captain was wearing, to say he had on a blue pea coat, grey trousers, little (ordinary) boots and a new hat. Witness promised to do what he asked, and some hours later, when the crew inquired of him where the Captain was, he told them just what prisoner had said. That practically ended his testimony.

The prisoner stoutly denied he was guilty and accused Muller of murdering the Captain himself, as far as he was concerned, alone and unaided. Indeed, it was really a case of one man's word against that of another. Apparently Muller had just as much motive for murdering the Captain as Ehlert had, and Ehlert had just as much motive as Muller. Also, with regard to opportunity, it was clearly shown that the two men had equal opportunities of committing the murder, and that the one, in fact, could have done it with just as little risk as the other. There was, therefore, as far as evidence went, not a pin to choose between them. However, it was quite obvious that

both judge and jury were biased in favour of Muller; his youth, undoubtedly, appealed to them. Defending counsel, to give him his due, played the game and did his level best to make Muller incriminate himself, but Muller was not to be caught napping; for his years he was extraordinarily wary, and in the end the jury, as anyone present might have foreseen all along, exonerated Muller and pronounced the prisoner, Ehlert, guilty. He was, accordingly, sentenced to death, and, in due course, executed.

But was he guilty? It was a question upon which the British public was divided. Some thought he was, some thought he wasn't. The Law, however, professed to be certain, and all we can hope is that in this instance, at least, it was no "hass."



## XXIV

### A PORTUGUESE MYSTERY

ON May 28, 1864, the *Mary and Annie*, trading ship of Scotland, was lying at anchor off Pomaron in Portugal. It was 8 o'clock in the evening, and everything on board her seemed normal and regular, when, suddenly, there was a loud splash and the moment after a cry of "Man overboard." Now traders, such as the *Mary and Annie*, did not at that date carry many crew or many boats either, and the latter were frequently ill-provided with oars and difficult to launch. It was, probably, so in this case, for when a boat was eventually lowered, no traces of the missing man could be found. His identity, however, was established. He was a young ordinary seaman called John Rodgers, a native of Ayr. After searching for him for awhile the boat returned to the *Mary and Annie*, and as nothing further could be done, the crew turned into the fo'c'sle again, and all was once more quiet.

The morning, however, brought news. A boat rowed from shore to the *Mary and Annie* with a message from the local authorities stating that the

\* See *News of the World*, August 21, 1864.

body of a sailor, believed to belong to the *Mary and Annie*, had been found on the seashore, under circumstances that strongly suggested foul play.

The Captain of the *Mary and Annie* at once accompanied the boat back to Pomaron, and on seeing the dead man, identified him as Rodgers. One glance at the corpse was quite sufficient to see it was a case of murder. Rodgers' hands were tied behind his back with cords, and there were two terrible wounds on his head, quite sufficient to cause death. He had evidently been struck with some very heavy instrument. The matter being a serious one was reported to the British Consul at Villa Real, and inquiries were set on foot. Nothing, apparently, however, ever came of them, and the affair was simply left as a mystery.

The Captain of the *Mary and Annie* said Rodgers had asked permission on the morning of May 18 to go on shore, and, for various reasons, he had been obliged to refuse it him. Later on, in the morning, Rodgers had taken it into his head to jump overboard and swim to land without leave. He, the Captain, could only presume that he had fallen into bad hands on landing and been murdered. And this was the view officialdom apparently adopted too. But was it the right one?

Supposing the Captain and some of the crew of the *Mary and Annie*, or both, had had a grudge against Rodgers. Might they not, finding that they could so easily throw the blame on some one else, have got rid of him themselves? As I have elsewhere remarked, such deeds in the mercantile navy were by no means uncommon, and could generally be wrought

with impunity, as any testimony with regard to crime on board ship in those days was extraordinarily difficult to obtain. For a variety of reasons sailors hated giving evidence, and would go to almost any length to avoid doing so.

## XXV

### FOUND IN MARSEILLES HARBOUR

ONE day in January, 1872, some policemen in a boat in Marseilles harbour perceived a big black chest floating on the water. Thinking it might contain a treasure, some valuable relic from a wreck, they at once rowed to it and hauled it on board. To their dismay and terror, however, the chest did not contain gold or silver but human remains. They proved to be the trunk and sawn-off limbs of a man ; and it was not long before they were identified as belonging to Mr. Grego, a young Marseilles merchant, who had mysteriously disappeared from his home on January 16. He was collecting money for his employers at the time, and it had been supposed that he had absconded with it. Great, therefore, was the general surprise when it was learned that he had, unquestionably, been murdered. But further surprises and sensation were to follow. There were startling headlines in the evening papers to the effect that two supposed friends of Mr. Grego's, called respectively Toledano and Sitbon, and a porter employed by the former, had been arrested.\* Little by little the Press unfolded a strange tale. It was this.

\* See *Penny Illustrated Paper*, June 1, 1872.

In the autumn of 1871 Grego and Sitbon were on very friendly terms, at least so those who knew them believed. Then, one day, Sitbon met a young Algerian called Maman, and became so strangely fascinated by him that he began to neglect Grego in consequence. Grego expostulated, and there was a violent quarrel. This was the beginning of the break in the friendship, and very soon something happened that increased the ill-feeling between the two friends very considerably. Grego was in love with a pretty sempstress. She, however, grew tired of him, and he realized this fact only too well when he saw her one day walking along a certain street in Marseilles, arm-in-arm with Sitbon, and watched her enter a house in this same street with him. Mad with jealousy Grego hurried off, and chancing to meet Toledano, with whom, also, he had not been on good terms of late, their differences resulting in a lawsuit, foolishly told him what he had seen, adding that he was quite certain the house Sitbon and the girl had entered bore a bad name. He thought Toledano had quite got over their recent dispute and was as friendly with him as ever, but he was mistaken. Toledano hated him, and now seeing an opportunity for revenge, he at once hurried off to Sitbon and narrated to him, no doubt with a good deal of embroidery, all that Grego had said with regard to his relations with the girl.

As he had anticipated, Sitbon was furious. He wanted to dash off at once and take summary vengeance on Grego, but the crafty Toledano prevented him.

"If you want to be equal with the fellow, Sitbon," he said, "I can tell you how."

He then proposed that they should feign extreme friendliness with Grego, lure him round to a quiet spot and murder him. Sitbon agreed, and no sooner was the plot hatched, than it was put into execution. Calling on Grego, with every pretence of reconciliation and affection, they told him they were having a party, to which they had invited some very pretty girls, and that they would be truly delighted if he would come round to their place to meet them. Grego, whose particular weakness, apparently, lay in his fondness for the other sex, at once accepted, and thus fell, an easy prey, into the trap.

The night fixed for the supposed party arriving, Grego duly turned up, but the room, to his surprise, instead of being brilliantly illuminated, was in semi-darkness, and only Sitbon, Toledano, and a porter belonging to the house were there. Before, however, he could ask for an explanation, Sitbon and Toledano threw themselves upon him, and while the one attempted to throttle him, the other proceeded to smash in his head either with a poker or some other heavy instrument.

As soon as he was dead, they fetched a big black chest and asked the porter to help them put the body into it, but he refused. Not able to get their victim into the chest *in toto*, they procured a saw and cut him up, the porter, apparently, watching them, but doing nothing. When this horrible task was accomplished, they carried the box, under cover of the night, to the seashore, and, putting it in a boat, rowed it out to sea and flung it overboard. To their horror, however, it would not sink, and in a terrible fright, lest it should give them away, they returned home.



To their surprise and joy, however, the disappearance of Grego was attributed to quite a different cause, and they were congratulating themselves that they were out of the wood, when the box was found.

The morning after the finding of it in the harbour Sitbon heard a boy in the street shout out, as he ran by, "Shocking murder in the Rue Montgrand," and this so terrified him that he hastily packed a few of his possessions in a portmanteau and fled to England. Toledano, on the contrary, like the cool villain he was, remained perfectly self-possessed, and donning mourning went to Grego's funeral, where, no doubt, he shed many crocodile tears. The French detectives, however, living up to their reputation, soon got to work, and before very long arrested first of all Toledano and the porter for the crime, and then, working in conjunction with the English police, Sitbon. All three were tried for murder, but whereas Sitbon and Toledano were sentenced to death and duly executed, the porter was merely sent to penal servitude for life.

And there, as far as the law was concerned, the matter ended.\* However, although nothing is actually recorded to warrant it, one cannot help surmising that at the trial for the murder of Grego, much that might have affected the case, though only slightly, perhaps, never came out. For instance, is it not more than likely that the pretty sempstress and Maman, too, had a finger in the pie and knew more about the crime than was popularly supposed?

\* See *Penny Illustrated Paper*, June 1, 1872.

## XXVI

### FOUND IN THE DOCKS AT SHADWELL

ONE day in June, 1863, no little sensation was created in the neighbourhood of the London Docks by a certain discovery. A locksman called Francis \* chancing to peer over the side of the quay into the river espied a body floating on the water and bumping with the tide against the masonry. He at once procured a boat and rowing to the body, which proved to be that of a woman, towed it to the nearest steps. The face, together with the whole of the top of the head, was missing, an ear, only, hanging to a piece of skin, being visible in its place.

Francis, appalled at the sight, quickly fetched a constable, who, in his turn, quickly communicated with the police authorities. Hence, very little time was lost before the body was undergoing a very careful medical examination.

One of the legs was broken and there was a nasty wound in the throat, the rest of the body, saving for the head, was whole. But who was the woman and how had she got into the river? From her clothes, she was wearing a gown of some coarse, dark material and a crinoline, it seemed likely that she belonged to

\* See *News of the World*, May 10, 1863.

the working classes and was a servant girl or a factory hand. There was nothing on her, however, saving the aforesaid garments, that could help the work of identification—no letters, no purse, no trinkets. And this again suggested foul play. Had she been first of all robbed and then murdered? Among the many who viewed the body was a pugilist called George King, and he no sooner saw it than he identified it as that of Ellen Donovan, a pretty girl, who, he candidly acknowledged, had been living with him. Indeed, he appeared to act with the greatest frankness, and said that on the Thursday, prior to the discovery of the body, he and Donovan had quarrelled. She had then left him, and he had not seen her since. He repeated this story at the inquest. Although a thorough search was made for it, the head of the girl was not found—it is astounding how many heads have been lost in the Thames \*—and the medical evidence suggesting that it might have been crushed off accidentally by some barge or boat, there was nothing beyond the wound in the throat, which the examining doctor said might also have been accidental, to show how the girl died. Consequently, the usual verdict of “Found dead” was returned, and there the case terminated.

The public, however, were far from satisfied. Undoubtedly a few believed the possible, perhaps, but extremely improbable theory suggested by the doctors, that deceased had fallen into the river and been crushed between the quay and some craft; but a far larger percentage believed that the pugilist

\* For example, the head of Mrs. Thomas, who was murdered in 1879 at Richmond by Kate Webster; and that of the victim in the great Thames mystery of 1857.

knew more of the matter than he cared to disclose ; whilst a very great many were of the opinion that the girl had been lured on to one of the many foreign vessels lying close at hand, and, after being subjected to ill-usage, had been barbarously murdered and thrown overboard.

## XXVII

### A ROTHERHITHE PUZZLE

**O**N August 3, 1828, a waterman who was rowing his wherry between Millstairs and Founder's Stairs near Rotherhithe saw something floating on the water, which caused him to pause in his occupation and stare in speechless horror. It was a body, but whether of a man or woman he could not say, for the simple reason it lacked a head. Getting hold of it with a boat-hook, he pulled it on shore, and then at once ran off to the police. When they arrived on the scene, accompanied by a doctor, an examination of the remains took place.

The body proved to be that of a male. The head had been severed with some sharp instrument, and the arms were fastened to the sides with rope yarns. The left leg was missing, but there were no marks of violence on the trunk, which, by the way, was partially nude. At the inquest the most astounding theory was put forward. Just by the spot where the body was found a main sewer, communicating with one of the Borough Hospitals, emptied itself into the river, and the theory referred to suggested \* that the body was that of some pauper patient at the hospital ;

\* *Annual Register*, August, 1828.

and that after it had been dissected by some doctor or student, it had been thrown away into the sewer, and had floated down with the refuse into the Thames.

Most of the jurymen indignantly repudiated this suggestion, declaring that not only was there nothing in the evidence so far given to show that the body had been dissected ; but there was nothing in the manner in which the head and one leg had been severed to warrant the assertion that it was the work of the hospital students, who frequently got blamed for what they never did ; \* and as for the body being subsequently thrown by them into the sewer, like a dead cat or dog, the bare thought of such a thing was a monstrous libel.

A somewhat heated discussion ensued, at the end of which the jury, after debating among themselves for some time, returned a verdict of " Found Dead," amid the protests of the majority of those present.

A week or so later some watermen, while dredging the Thames at Bell Wharf, Shadwell, drew up something in their net they were not anticipating. It was the head of a man. Dr. Bateman of Ratcliffe, on examining it, found it to be perfect, that is to say, all the features, eyes, teeth, nose, and mouth, and even the scalp were intact, a fact which went far to prove that the dissecting theory put forward at the inquest was just as groundless as it was tactless and insulting. The head was, however, far too much decomposed to permit of identification, and this at once led to another controversy. While certain of the medical men who examined the head maintained it belonged to the body

\* The Great Thames Mystery of 1873 and the Barnes Common Mystery of 1879 were thought at first to be practical jokes on the part of medical students.



already discovered, others were of the opinion that it did not. And while some held the view that the owner of it had been drowned (probably accidentally), his head being subsequently severed by the action of the tide forcing it against the cables of the ships moored in the river; others, including a large proportion of the British public, thought it quite likely that he was a sailor, who, whether the body previously found belonged to him or not, had either been murdered on one of the numerous ships, most probably a foreign one, lying at anchor in the Thames, or on shore by some of the desperate characters that infested the whole of Thames side. The police authorities, apparently, thought it convenient to favour the former theory, for the problem as to whether foul murder had been done or not, interesting as it then was, and to some extent still is, remains to this day as much a mystery as ever.

## XXVIII

### THE CORPSE BOX OF HELL GATE

ONE morning in June, 1859, a small fishing boat was leisurely ploughing the waves near Hell's Gate. It was a typical American summer morning—a dazzling blue sky above, a dazzling blue sea beneath, and sunbeams, the brightest of laughing, golden sunbeams, everywhere. Being early, there was an absence of that intense heat which strikes newcomers from across the Atlantic as so appalling, and the air was still comparatively cool and fresh. Everything, indeed, suggested life, young, vigorous, joyous life; and one could not imagine a cheerier scene. Doubtless with some such appreciation of his surroundings the sole occupant of the fishing boat sat with one hand grasping the tiller and the other holding, for awhile, his freshly filled pipe. Then, suddenly, he leaned forward, with his eyes fixed upon some object floating on the water. Tacking, so as to come close up against it, he discovered, to his astonishment, that it was an enormous oak chest. Now, although the weather for some considerable time past had been fine, this did not preclude the possibility of a marine catastrophe of some sort, and the fisherman supposing that the chest came from some vessel that had, perhaps, struck an

iceberg, or gone down in a collision off the perennially fog-girt coast of Newfoundland, resolved to tow it ashore and see what it contained.

Accordingly, attaching it by means of a rope to his craft, he tacked about again, and made, as nearly as possible in a bee line, for Port Morris. Having lost no time in arriving there, he towed the chest up alongside the quay, and called to some of the men he knew to give him a hand in hauling it up the steps. The men complied, but the task proved by no means an easy one, as the steps were steep and slippery and the chest tremendously heavy.

At last, however, it was safely landed, and then the work of opening it commenced. As knot after knot of the rope bound round the chest was undone, many and varied were the speculations as to what was inside. Some suggested clothes, others books, while others, again, hinted at money—piles of glinting, gleaming gold, maybe Californian ingots or bright and sparkling Spanish doubloons. The fisherman was almost beside himself with joyful expectations; he had found it, he kept on remarking, and whatever it contained, no matter what it was, would be his.

After much coaxing and pulling, the rope around the box at length slackened and fell off, the lock, in response to a vicious jab from an improvised jemmy, abruptly yielded, and the lid, amid the most tense silence and excitement, was raised. It was then that the fisherman and his mates experienced the shock of their lives. Instead of gold, the inside of the chest revealed a row of white, distorted corpse faces and a confused mass of human remains, bodies, arms, legs, hands and feet, all packed promiscuously

into the smallest possible space. Never had a morning sun looked down on a more blood-curdling and revolting spectacle. For some seconds those present were too appalled and terrified to speak ; but when reason and the power to act returned to them, they immediately made off, helter skelter, in search of the police, broadcasting the news all along the quay as they went. It was thus that the affair was brought to the notice of the Portal Authorities, who immediately ordered a medical examination, with the result that the remains found in the chest, and partially covered with lime and shavings, were proved to be those of an elderly man and woman, a young man and young woman, a little girl of about six years of age, a boy of about four, and a negro. All were in night attire, which, with the exception of the negro's, was of the finest texture, the woman's being ornamented with the most costly lace, and marked with initials that were either C.W., or G.W. On the stocking of one of the children was an unmistakable M.A. Beyond these marks there were no clues to identity, the faces of all the bodies being rendered absolutely unrecognizable through the action of lime and water. The inspecting doctor declared that the bodies had been in the chest and sea for at least seventy hours. The negro had been decapitated, and possibly to make room for him, his body, like that of the elderly man, had been doubled up, and his head placed, as if in bitter mockery, close beside his feet. The rest of the corpses were whole, and saving for a wound, probably caused by a dagger, on one of them, entirely free from any indications of violence. Indeed, it was impossible

to say exactly, presuming they had been killed, how they had been killed.

This is the gist of the case as actually reported in the Press,\* but as it was not followed up, at least so far as I can discover, one can only conclude that the matter was for some peculiar reason, perhaps best known to the American police of that date, abruptly dropped, and the affair left a mystery. Among those who read this solitary report of the case speculation would seem to have been rife; some suggested the whole affair was simply a very gruesome jest on the part of New York medical students, others that the bodies were those of a party of foreigners murdered on some foreign yacht or other vessel, either in New York harbour itself or in its immediate vicinity.

A solution to the mystery, which is somewhat different from either of these, has occurred to me, but before I give it, I must remind my readers that it is merely a suggested solution, that it must therefore be taken on that understanding, and simply for as much as it is worth. Here it is.

At the time of the finding of the "Corpse Chest" the United States was being terrorized by various singularly daring and sinister gangs of desperadoes. One of them, mainly composed of Italians, confined itself to robbery with violence in big cities, while another included among other specialities that of train wrecking, accompanied by wholesale plunder and murder. An article in reference to the latter appeared in the Foreign News Column of the *News of the World* for June, 1859.

\* See *News of the World*, June 26, 1859.

Here is a short extract from it :

“ A man called M'Laughlin has been tried at Chicago (Illinois) on the accusation of causing trains of cars on the Galena and Chicago railroad to be thrown from the tracks. From what has been disclosed it is apparent there is a league of villains in the West, banded together for the purpose of murder, theft, and arson. Women as well as men belong to the gang, which has branches in Chicago, Cleveland, Buffalo, and all the Lake cities. Causing railroad accidents is one of their favourite deeds.”

Now, since it is a fact that there was a gang of this description at work at the time the “ Corpse Chest ” was found, in my opinion, it is not at all unlikely that this said gang was responsible for the butchery of the seven unidentified people whose remains were found in the chest. It requires no very great strain of the imagination to conjure up some such circumstances as the following (cases, more or less similar to the one I am about to portray, were, at that period, constantly occurring) : —To begin with, we will suppose that a planter named Garcia Williams, prior to the finding of the chest, was living with his family, some distance up country, possibly on the borders of Mexico. As his name implies, he was of mixed origin, and the hot southern blood in him revealed itself in his swarthy complexion and extremely arbitrary and passionate disposition. His wife, a full-blooded Spaniard, was still beautiful, despite her fifty odd years, and even more haughty and despotic than Garcia himself. They only had one child, Leopold, to whom they were very devoted,



and in the summer of 1857, Leopold, his wife and two children, a boy and girl, were staying with them.

The plantation was a large one, and among the hundreds of slaves employed on it was a young and rather handsome, though sinister looking, half-caste called Fernando. His mother, undoubtedly, was Anna, the negress, but the identity of his father was by no means so apparent. Only a few of the older slaves remembered that "the boss" once had a sneaking regard for the slim and by no means ill-favoured Anna, but this recollection, of course, was only hinted at in the strictest secrecy. Now, whether it was simply on account of these suppressed rumours, or whether it was because she had acquired some perfectly authentic information on the subject, it was only too evident that Garcia's wife cordially detested the young half-caste.

On one occasion she had caused him to be soundly whipped for not being what she was pleased to term "sufficiently respectful," while for another small offence she had ordered him to be placed all day in the pillory. He had tried to run away once, but the punishment he received made him think twice before repeating the offence.

In the spring of 1857 Garcia Williams bought several new slaves, and among them a young woman called Tady. Now it so happened that Tady was quite beautiful, and, as a consequence, she soon had a band of admirers. Johnson, the black foreman, was one, Cæsar, a very puny middle-aged nigger, another, and the handsome Fernando a third; but it soon became apparent that she favoured the half-caste most of all.

Had Fernando's disposition been different all might yet have gone tolerably well, but he was vain as well as ill-natured, and nothing, apparently, delighted him more than taunting and deriding his less fortunate rival, Johnson. The two frequently had high words, and on one occasion they came to blows. Johnson got the worst of it, and after being knocked down in the presence of Tady, he went off vowing immediate vengeance.

A day or two later, a commotion was caused among the negroes, owing to several of them having lost things. These losses, trivial enough to the majority of people, meant a lot to coloured slaves, who possessed little beyond what they stood in; and their lamentations were loud and bitter. But something much more serious was to follow. Mrs. Williams, junior, on going into her room one night to dress for dinner, missed her purse, and it was then discovered that a valuable pearl necklace had disappeared too. A hullabaloo was, of course, raised, and presently Johnson, the foreman, informed Mrs. Garcia Williams, senior, he had found a clue.

Leading her to the flower-bed immediately beneath the window of her daughter-in-law's bedroom he pointed triumphantly to a knife. It was lying in full view, with one open blade a mass of sparkles in the brilliant sunshine. "Der missus, see dat," Johnson cried, pointing excitedly to it, "de villen who stole de purse and de jewels drop dat in his hurry."

"Do any of the slaves possess a knife?" Mrs. Williams exclaimed, eyeing it as if it were a rattler or some kind of reptile.

“Mebbe some of ’em do, missus,” Johnson said, “any rate I ken find out.”

Some hours later Johnson came to the house accompanied by a whole troop of blacks, who, on seeing the knife, swore it belonged to Fernando. He was the only nigger on the plantation, they avowed, who owned one. The order was then given for Fernando’s quarters to be searched. It did not take long to look through the young half-caste’s possessions, as they consisted, only, of a small tin box with a few ounces of tobacco in it, a tawdry frame without any picture, an old dilapidated wide-awake hat, a ditto pair of store shoes, reserved for very rare occasions, and a few articles of the coarsest and cheapest clothing; and Cæsar, the middle-aged nigger who conducted the search, was turning away, satisfied, but obviously disappointed that the necklace was not there, when, at Johnson’s suggestion, he examined the bunk itself, and under a loose piece of boarding he discovered not only what he was looking for but all the other missing articles as well.

It was in vain that Fernando protested; his indignant denial of the charge availed him nothing. Loaded with chains and pursued for some distance by an angry mob, he was led triumphantly into the presence of Mrs. Garcia Williams, who in the temporary absence of her husband only too willingly undertook the task of dispensing justice.

Upon hearing the sentence, namely, that he should be strapped to the pump, in the usual way, for an indefinite period, Fernando promptly fell on his knees before his tormentor and grovelled. She was inexorable, however, and to the pump he went.

Strapped so tightly to the iron upright that the rope, in places, literally cut into his flesh, he was placed in such a position that drops of water from the pump invariably and constantly fell on exactly the same spot on his bare head, which was, at the same time, exposed to the fierce rays of a pitiless sun.

At first, of course, the water felt cool and refreshing, but it was not long before a slight tenderness was felt in the affected spot, and after that a dull aching, that speedily became more and more acute. At length the torture was so great that Fernando shrieked, and when he could shriek no longer, he lost consciousness.

\* \* \* \* \*

In this condition he was liberated and tossed carelessly aside, to lie huddled up and bleeding on a pile of refuse, till his benumbed faculties and muscles had recovered sufficiently to enable him to move.

A day or two later, he was whipped back again to work. He bore it for a week, and then one night, when the snores of all around him assured him that, at all events, the bulk of the nigger population was asleep, he made another dash for freedom.

This time luck favoured him. Stealing down to the river unobserved, he secured a raft without any difficulty and made off on it down stream. He landed at dawn, and footing it at a rapid pace all day, without ceasing, he arrived at sunset in a big city.

Not knowing what to do and desperate with hunger and exhaustion, he was contemplating breaking into a store and running the risk of being caught, when he was suddenly accosted by a stranger, who, expressing

sympathy with him in his plight, took him to a restaurant and stood him to a meal. As one might imagine, this led to an exchange of confidences. Fernando told the stranger about the cruel and unjust treatment he had been subjected to on the plantation, and the stranger, in return, informed Fernando that he belonged to a gang of train wreckers and robbers who happened just then to be in urgent need of recruits.

Finally, after some discussion as to terms of service, obligations and risks, Fernando was prevailed upon to join the gang. He had his own reasons for doing so. Needless to say, perhaps, revenge was his one absorbing passion. In order to satisfy it he worked night and day, and so successful was he that he was soon able, with the money he had acquired, to establish a system of espionage on his late employer's plantation, by which all the movements of the family were periodically reported to him.

And at last he reaped his reward. The news came through that Mr. and Mrs. Garcia Williams, their son and his wife and children, accompanied by Johnson, were about to depart by boat from Matamoras to New Orleans, whence they were going by rail to New York City. Fernando had a naturally quick brain, and never did it work more rapidly than now.

The family sailed as was announced from Matamoras, and, in due course, reached New Orleans.

On landing there, they found a couple of four-wheelers standing on the quay, and commandeering them at once they got in, telling the drivers to make direct for the best hotel in the town. The drivers



of the vehicles, however, being members of Fernando's gang, instead of taking them to the leading hotel, drove them to a lonely spot, some little distance outside the confines of the town. The rest was singularly easy. Fernando and his colleagues pounced out upon the vehicles, the drivers of which, instead of urging on their horses, immediately pulled up. The passengers, shrieking and protesting, were then, none too delicately, dragged out and made to enter a sinister looking house on the wayside, a house which Fernando had chosen and carefully prepared for their reception. In the centre of the room into which they were roughly hustled was an enormous oak chest, and into this chest the victims, with one exception, were thrust alive. The one exception was Johnson, who, being considerably over six feet in height, could not be got in whole, and so, luckily for him, had to be decapitated.

Then after the contents had been plentifully sprinkled with lime, the chest was shut, locked and corded, after which it was taken back to New Orleans by cab, placed on board a tramp steamer, and finally dropped into the sea—somewhere about latitude  $40^{\circ}$  N. and longitude  $73^{\circ}$  W.

But that is not all. The train that left New Orleans later on that evening was wrecked and set on fire by other members of Fernando's gang. Hence, of course, it was not unnaturally supposed that Garcia Williams and his family, who, it was known, intended to travel by this train, were included among the unfortunate passengers whose hopelessly charred and mutilated remains could not possibly be identified; and, consequently, no one ever thought of associating



the Garcia Williams family with the remains subsequently found in the oak chest near Hell's Gate. I repeat this theory is merely a theory ; but I might add that it is not altogether groundless, since it is founded on co-incidental happenings, namely, train wrecking and the gross ill-treatment of slaves.

The fact that the remains were sprinkled with lime—a sometimes powerful preservative—easily accounts for the fact that the doctor who examined them said they had only been in the water about seventy hours.

## XXIX

### FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW

ONE Thursday night in February, 1855, snow fell heavily along the Devon coast, and in the early morning the people of Dawlish, Teignmouth, Exmouth, Topsham, and Lympstone made a somewhat startling discovery. In all sorts of places, on the tops of houses and walls, in gardens, courtyards, lanes and fields, and along the seashore, there were the most peculiar footprints in the snow. They were not unlike the impressions of a donkey's shoe, but from the fact that they were usually about eight feet apart, the one in advance of the other, they appeared to have been caused by a biped.

They showed the outer crest of the foot only, which suggested, of course, that whatever made them was convex ; and although, for the most part, they were whole, in not a few instances they appeared to be cloven. In some places, they apparently came right up to the house or wall, and then retreated, but what astonished one the most, perhaps, was that there were no impressions in the snow anywhere to indicate that the creature leaving its footprints ever rested. It was, obviously, always on the move, and from the fact that the places it visited were either on the coast

itself, or close to the mouth of a river, Many people formed the theory, that it came either from across the sea, or, preposterous though it may seem, out of the sea itself.

Now a few of the more superstitious Devonians declared at once the footprints were Satan's, \* and designated the tracks made by them "The Devil's Walk or Parade." Indeed, the affair created such a sensation locally that some of the clergy mentioned it in their Sunday sermons, one of them, the Rev. Mr. Musgrave, suggesting that the prints were caused by a kangaroo.

Professor Owen, on being shown a drawing of the footmarks, expressed the opinion that they were made by the hind leg of a badger; but this view was so obviously at variance with the facts of the case that one cannot help suspecting Professor Owen of sheer scepticism and a desire to settle the matter, once and for all, by killing it with ridicule. However, if such were his intentions, he certainly did not succeed; for the mysterious footprints having been seen and taken seriously by many sane people had aroused a deep-rooted and widespread interest in the affair.

Hence, despite Professor Owen's "solution," the case was still regarded as a mystery, and the authorship of the queer footprints remains problematic to this day. The majority of these footprints being found on the seashore and in the immediate neighbourhood of the sea makes one think that the sea must have been indirectly responsible for them; but to what extent, and in what way, I will not even hazard a guess.

\* *News of the World*, February 25, 1855.



PART V

UNLUCKY AND ILL-OMENED  
SHIPS





### XXX

#### THE STRANGE CASE OF THE "USK"

ONE day, in the spring of 1863, a man bearing the unmistakable stamp of a sailor knocked at the door of a shipping office in Cardiff. On being told to come in, he turned the handle with no little hesitation and reluctance, and entered. As he had anticipated, those within stared at him in astonishment.

"Why, you back already!" they exclaimed in chorus. "What's the matter? What's happened?"

"Nothing," the visitor exclaimed, stammering a little and clearing his throat.

"Nothing!" the shipowners ejaculated. "Nothing the matter! Then, why are you here? Explain yourself."

"All right, gentlemen," the nautical man replied, speaking slowly and with considerable embarrassment. "I know you will be terribly upset with me, but it can't be helped."

He then proceeded with his story, which was, in brief, this:—Five months previously, the *Usk* had left Cardiff, under his charge, *en route* for Huasco via Cape Horn. All went well till they got to Cape Horn,

when he saw, one day, a strange sight at sea. It was a great and beautiful spirit form, which he took to be divine, standing alongside the vessel, and it warned him, at the peril of his own soul and the souls of every one on board the ship, not to proceed any further. "Go back, go back at once" it said sternly, "and tell those who employ you I have ordained it." The Captain was so impressed and frightened, that he at once told the helmsman to turn the vessel round and make for home.

"And do you really expect us to believe this cock-and-bull story?" his employers said angrily when he finished. "You will have to answer for your conduct to the Board of Trade." And he did. The Board of Trade speedily instituted an inquiry into the whole case. The Captain, on being examined, stuck to his story. He declared most emphatically that a spirit entity, which he believed to be divine, had bidden him not to make the passage of the Cape, but to return to Wales instead. The crew, on being questioned, said the Captain was, no doubt, somewhat eccentric, but, apart from that, they had always found him very sober and careful. In other words, a good man to serve under.

These statements were corroborated by the first mate, who merely added that the only time he had ever known the Captain behave really queer was when he told them of his vision and ordered the ship to be put back. He said that he remonstrated and tried to prevent the Captain, whereupon the latter at once had him put in irons. This practically concluded the inquiry, and the Board were very little the wiser for it. Feeling themselves bound to do something,

however, in the exercise of their authority, they spoke very severely to the Captain, and then cancelled his certificate. In due course another Captain was appointed to the *Usk*, and she left Swansea with a none too willing crew, since they had taken it into their heads that the ship was unlucky, *en route*, once again, for Huasco. Several weeks later, the Board received a communication, which must have set them thinking. It was from the British Consul at Coquimbo, Chili, and it stated that the *Usk* had been destroyed at sea by fire. Later on the following details came to hand.

The *Usk* weathering Cape Horn arrived on November 16, in latitude  $33^{\circ}$  S. and longitude  $74^{\circ} 10'$  W. Suddenly smoke was seen coming from the hatches. The Captain at once set to work to remove the blasting powder that was in the hold, and four tons of it had actually been thrown overboard, when there was an explosion. The Captain then had the vessel's head turned towards the mainland, and getting her under easy sail ordered the boats to be got ready. Soon after this, the smoke arose in clouds, fore and aft, and since it was obviously dangerous to remain on board any longer, the Captain ordered an instant departure. A little later on, while they were pulling for the land, they saw her catch on fire. Some of the crew were picked up by a schooner, and taken to Coquimbo, while the rest reached Caldera some days later. The cause of the fire was never ascertained,\* but any sailor in those days would have told you that the *Usk* perished, owing entirely to her disregard of "the warning."

\* *News of the World*, January 24, 1864.

## XXXI

### THE FIGUREHEAD ON THE MAST

**A** PROPOS of unlucky ships the *Chicago Times* of March, 1885, contained a strange story. In short it was this. Two men at work one morning on the topmast head of one of the lake schooners lost their hold quite inexplicably, and falling to the deck were killed. This somewhat unusual accident made the rest of the crew believe the vessel was unlucky, and as soon as she reached Buffalo, they left her. The Captain tried to get men to unload the grain on board her, but the story of her having lost her luck had spread, and the majority of the grain-trimmers he approached refused to set foot on board her. Then, when, after no end of trouble, he did succeed in unloading her, and she was ready to sail for Cleveland, a fresh difficulty arose. He had to get a crew to man her. And this proved almost impossible.

“What, sail in her?” was the almost invariable reply of the men who were asked to join. “No fear, she’s too d—d unlucky.”

In the end, however, the Captain did manage to get a number of men to promise to sign on for the voyage, but no sooner had they come on board the ship, than one of them, turning to the mate, who was

standing near by, exclaimed, "What have you got a figurehead on the mast for?" The mate glanced upwards. "Good God!" he ejaculated, turning deadly pale, "it's old Bill" (one of the men who had fallen from the mast and been killed). And this so scared the new crew that they, one and all, hurried off. The indefatigable Captain still persevered, however, and eventually obtaining another crew, sailed. But he never got to Cleveland, for his ship was sunk in collision with another vessel off Dunkirk.

## XXXII

### THE ILL-OMENED "SQUANDO"

IN 1893 there was lying in the docks at Bathurst, New Brunswick, a trading vessel called the *Squando*.\* She was lying there because she could not do otherwise. No crew would man her, and the reason was this. Owing to certain terrible things that had taken place on board her, she had got an evil reputation, and, consequently, it was thought to be extremely unlucky to sail in her. How it all began no one seemed to know, but her history appears to have been tolerably clean and uneventful up to about 1889, when she was lying at anchorage off San Francisco. Her Captain, then, assisted by his wife, created no little sensation, one day, by seizing the first mate bodily, and beheading him.

There had been an ill-feeling for some time between the Captain's wife and the mate, and, apparently, this crime was the outcome of it. The next Captain of the *Squando* was killed in a mutiny; and the two succeeding ones both died while on board.

After that, no one would sail in her, and she had, willy nilly, to remain in Bathurst. But apart from being unlucky, she was said to be haunted. The Norwegian Consul at Bathurst engaged two watchmen to look after her, but after their first night on duty, they came off her, pale and haggard, and with a tale to tell that was strange indeed. Every now and

\* *Sights and Shadows*, by F. Lee, pp. 46, 47.



again they said, cold hands had touched them and caught hold of their clothes, while articles had been flung about the deck and cabins by beings they could not see. And that was not all. Voices belonging to these same invisible beings had kept on telling them to go, and in one of the cabins, more than once, they had seen the shadowy outlines of a man in seafaring costume, but without a head.

Indeed, these experiences, they declared, had been so appalling, that nothing on earth would induce them to set foot again on a vessel so "accursed." Those who, subsequently, ventured on the *Squando* after nightfall and stayed there any length of time told a similar tale, and in the end, since no one would go near her, let alone sail in her, she had to be abandoned.

With regard to the alleged hauntings, one must, of course, make allowances for a certain amount of exaggeration. However, provided Mr. Lee's history of the vessel was correct, and that tragedies, such as those to which he testifies, did occur on board her, I do not think we need wonder at her being haunted, the wonder would be if she were not.

Judging by parallel cases, the murder of the mate was sufficient in itself to produce all kinds of ghostly phenomena. About that there seems to be no question. But an interesting question that might be raised in this case is, Was the *Squando* haunted before any crime was committed on her? If so, the tragedies referred to, besides producing hauntings themselves, might themselves have been partly due to hauntings. Let me explain. There is undoubtedly something about certain objects and certain localities (with regard the latter, the Crumbles near East-

bourne, the beach at Yarmouth, and the Bristol Avon gorge are examples) that induces people of a certain temperament to commit acts of violence. Hence, it is surely just possible that there may have been some such object on board. For instance, the timber or some portion of it, maybe only a plank, used in her construction, might well be the cause of some superphysical influence conducive to crime, since certain spots in a forest, and certain trees, attract spirits of such an evil and malignant nature, that they seek to contaminate, and generally succeed in doing so, all with whom they come in contact. And if not to the timber in the vessel, it is just possible that the evil influence might be traced to some piece of furniture on board her, an old chest, or clock, for instance, or some peculiar knick-knack or ornament, such, for example, as a Buddha or sacrificial knife. Spirits may, and in my experience often do, attach themselves to all kinds of objects, for all kinds of reasons, and their influence, as shown, is usually harmful and even deadly to a degree.

But, of course, on the other hand, the murder of the mate may alone have attracted forces sufficient in themselves to have given rise to all of a harrowing nature that subsequently happened. I admit that I have here indulged in theories that are, apparently, purely speculative, but it is only fair to add that they are given in good faith, and, also, in the belief, despite any appearance to the contrary, that they are not altogether groundless. Queer happenings, not apparently explicable by natural laws, took place on board the *Squando*, and that, perhaps, is all that can be said for certain.

PART VI

SOME STRANGE COLLISIONS  
AT SEA



## XXXIII

### THE RUNNING DOWN OF THE “STRATHCLYDE”

AT 5 a.m. on February 17, 1876, the fine iron steamship *Strathclyde* of Glasgow sailed from London, under the command of Captain John Dodd Eaton, for Bombay. She had on board her, in addition to forty-seven officers and crew, twenty-three passengers, all of whom were travelling first-class. Nothing of any moment occurred till 3 p.m., when she arrived off Dover. Here she discharged her pilot, and was proceeding on her course south-east by south, when the attention of Captain Eaton was drawn to a large steamer, steering down the Channel, about four miles astern, and to the north of his own vessel. She had passed the South Sand Head Light, and her speed being greater than that of the *Strathclyde*, she was rapidly overhauling the latter. However, as she appeared to be keeping to her former course, Captain Eaton had no misgivings; he simply inferred she was a following vessel, and that she would pass him in the ordinary way. Consequently he did not look at her again for some minutes. When he did, he received a nasty shock. She had come up

with the *Strathclyde* about two points abaft her port beam, and was not half a mile away. In these circumstances Captain Eaton did the only thing he could do, he immediately ordered the course of the *Strathclyde* to be changed, so that her bow might be turned away from the strange steamer and more towards the shore. The order was executed without a moment's delay, but great was Captain Eaton's astonishment, when he saw the oncoming vessel, which was now so near that her name could be read (she was the *Franconia*, a German steamship bound from Hamburg to New York), alter her course too. She was coming round with her helm ported, a most dangerous tactic to adopt at such close quarters, and one that brought her head towards the *Strathclyde's* port beam.\* Seeing her do this, Captain Eaton cried out to the men nearest him :

“What is she going to do ? She is trying to run us down.”

By this time the distance between the two ships had considerably diminished, and the excitement on board the *Strathclyde* was intense. Even to the most casual observer there could be no longer any doubt but that, for some extraordinary reason, although ostensibly merely trying to cross the track of the *Strathclyde*, the *Franconia* was actually trying to run into her. Indeed, a collision was now inevitable, and, in less than a minute after Captain Eaton had spoken, it came.

The *Franconia*, which was travelling at a considerable speed, struck the *Strathclyde* with terrific force

\* See *Annual Register*, February, 1876, and *Illustrated London News*, February 26, 1876.



about four feet above the engine-room bulk-head, between the funnel and mainmast, and her great bows being terribly sharp, murderously sharp, so those on board the *Strathclyde* thought, cut deep into the latter ship, penetrating, so Captain Eaton stated subsequently, at least four feet. Then she backed out, and to every one's dismay and terror, charged the *Strathclyde* a second time, striking her abreast the mainmast and making another terrible hole in her. She then dragged alongside the *Strathclyde*, and as she did so, the first mate of the *Strathclyde* and four of the crew, yielding to the excitement of the moment, jumped on board her.

In the meanwhile, Captain Eaton, who never for a second lost his head, and purposely kept his eyes open, did not see any "look-out" man on the *Franconia*. He did see some one on her bridge; but whoever that person was he made no effort to stand by and assist the *Strathclyde*. Directly after the second impact the *Franconia*, after, as I have said, dragging alongside the *Strathclyde*, tore away one of her boats, and clearing her stern, to the amazement and indignation of all those on board her victim, who were watching her, moved rapidly away. Hardly able to believe any ship's officer could behave in such a fashion, Captain Eaton telegraphed to the engine-room to stop. He then informed the passengers, who came crowding up on to the deck, that the ship would sink, but that there were boats enough on board to save them all, if only they would keep calm, and not give way to panic. He then put fifteen ladies and the stewardess into the port lifeboat, which was hanging on the davits and was large enough to hold forty people.

A number of the crew and other passengers promptly made a rush for her, but he prevented the majority of them getting in, and then had her swung round and lowered into the water. Immediately afterwards the ship's stern sank completely, and the swell that arose, in consequence, capsized the boat, throwing the occupants into the sea. Seeing this happen, the second officer promptly launched the gig on the starboard quarter, and getting into her with four of the crew succeeded in rescuing some of those who were struggling in the water. A number of passengers, who were clinging to the bridge, were now washed away by the waves, which were rising higher and higher over the doomed vessel, and which overturned another boat full of people, before it could be launched. The last to leave the vessel were the Captain, second engineer, and fireman. They jumped off her barely a minute before she took the final plunge and disappeared.

The Deal lugger *Early Morn* and the barque *Queen of the Nations* were soon on the spot, picking up those who were still alive, and the Captain was eventually taken on board the former, after being in the water about forty minutes. In all thirty-eight persons perished, and this, despite the fact that the catastrophe occurred within sight of land, and that prompt assistance was rendered by local craft.

The survivors' account of the collision, and especially that given by the Captain and officers of the *Strathclyde*, as may be imagined, aroused no small amount of indignation against the Captain of the *Franconia*. The *Franconia* was a much heavier vessel than the *Strathclyde*, their respective tonnage



THE COLLISION IN DOVER BAY: THE "FRANCONIA" BACKING FROM THE "STRATHCLYDE"

*From The Illustrated London News, Feb. 20th, 1870*



being 2000 and 1245, therefore it is not to be wondered at that the *Strathclyde* got the worst of the encounter.

The sequel to it was the arrest of Captain Ferdinand Keyne of the *Franconia*, on the charge of the manslaughter of Jessie Dorcas Young, one of the victims of the disaster. The actual cause of her death was shock to the system from immersion in the water, and for this it was the contention of the Crown that Keyne was responsible. The trial, which caused an immense sensation, especially in maritime circles, began on April 5, 1876, at the Central Criminal Court, the presiding judge being Mr. Baron Pollock. The Attorney-General opened the case for the Prosecution. The charge against the prisoner, a German, and Master as well as Captain of the *Franconia*, was that on February 17, he, by negligently navigating the vessel, came into collision with another vessel called the *Strathclyde*, that by this collision the *Strathclyde* was sunk, and deceased, who was a passenger on board her, lost her life. Continuing, he declared that the *Strathclyde* had left Victoria Docks about 3 o'clock on the morning of February 17. Taking the proper course for proceeding down the Channel on her voyage to Bombay, she arrived in due course off Dover. According to the rules of the road at sea, the *Franconia*, being a following vessel to the *Strathclyde*, should have passed her astern, and the case he should have to lay before the Court was that the *Franconia* had failed to take the necessary step of starboarding her helm, and the consequence was that a collision took place.

He then proceeded to call a number of witnesses,

chiefly the surviving officers and crew of the *Strathclyde*.

The evidence they gave revealed one of the most shocking cases of inhumanity and cowardice ever known at sea in modern times. It proved, conclusively, that Keyne turned a deaf ear to the many appeals from those on the *Strathclyde* for assistance, his one and only instinct, after striking the *Strathclyde*, being that of self-preservation. Indeed, he admitted such was the case himself, for, in answer to a question on that point, he replied that he never for one moment considered the saving of any of the lives on board the *Strathclyde*, since his own was as good as those of the others. He never even took the trouble to see to what extent the *Strathclyde* was damaged, perhaps he knew only too well, but steamed away for Dover as fast as possible. His first officer, with almost pathetic loyalty, tried to excuse him on the grounds that the fire compartment of the *Franconia* was full of water, thus insinuating that the vessel had sustained grievous injury, but such testimony found no corroboration in actual facts, any more than did his assertion that the prisoner ordered ropes to be thrown to the people on the *Strathclyde* and boats to be lowered. If such orders had been given, one naturally wanted to know why they were not obeyed, and this witness could not explain. His attempt to lay the onus for the collision on Captain Eaton by declaring that he neglected to port his helm, when signalled to do so by the prisoner, was equally futile, since the Prosecution had clearly shown it was the *Franconia's* business, in accordance with the rules of the road at sea, to avoid the *Strathclyde*. She it was



who should have starboarded her helm, some time prior to getting within either hailing or signalling distance. What the trial failed to elucidate was why she did not do so.

The defending counsel, Mr. Serjeant Parry, in addressing the jury, said that although he could not maintain that the prisoner had acted with heroism, still he submitted that in such a moment of peril, prisoner ought to be excused for trying to save his own vessel and the lives of the eighty persons who were on board. With regard to the collision itself, he should contend that Captain Keyne, in not having starboarded his helm till it was too late, had, at most, been merely guilty of an error of judgment. This, of course, strikes one as being the only line defending counsel could pursue, but it carried no weight, simply because the said error was of such a gross nature that no experienced seaman, such as Keyne, could possibly have made it. And the same might be said of the suggested possibility of a miscalculation of distance on the part of Captain Keyne. The merest tyro in the profession of seamanship could scarcely have made such a flagrant mistake.

In summing up, Mr. Baron Pollock said the first question for the jury to decide was whether the death of the deceased was the result of an act committed by the defendant. If they decided that it was, then it was for them to say what was the character of that act. If that act, and the death resulting from it, were due to an error of judgment, then prisoner could not be criminally liable. If, however, they should find that the fatality had been brought about by an act due to negligence, in that case, and in that case



only, Captain Keyne would be guilty of the crime of manslaughter. He must remind them that the mere abandonment of a vessel was an offence against the law of England ; but in a case where it was suggested that the mischief had been occasioned in the first instance by the prisoner, it was material to see what his conduct was after the occurrence.

The jury, apparently, soon made up their minds ; for they very promptly returned a verdict of guilty, and had it not been that Mr. Cohen, Q.C., the wily counsel for the defence, had something up his sleeve, one presumes that Keyne would have got a pretty stiff term of imprisonment, a light enough punishment for a man who so richly deserved hanging.

However, directly after the foreman of the jury had announced the verdict, Mr. Cohen delivered his surprise packet to the Court. He reminded the judge of a point of law raised in the case, which his lordship had promised to reserve for further consideration, and this point of law was whether the Court had the jurisdiction to try the case at all, since the defendant was a foreigner. Baron Pollock, in reply, said the point would have to be submitted to the Court of Criminal Appeal, and in the meanwhile the defendant would be "let out" upon the same bail as before.

Thus a villain, as black as any that ever stepped into the dock at the Central Criminal Court, was able to step out of it bland and smiling. His astute adviser had fended for him well. The sitting of the Special Court of Appeal for judgment in this case was commenced on November 12 of the same year. The point was first of all argued before six judges,

then, as one of them disagreed with the rest, a re-argument was directed. This time fourteen judges, including the six original ones, viz., the Lord Chief Baron, Mr. Justice Lush, Sir R. Phillimore, Baron Pollock, Mr. Justice Field, and Mr. Justice Lindley, participated in it. Judgment was delivered on November 13, by the Lord Chief Justice. In this account of the case it is unnecessary to record the "judgment" in full; however, the average reader will, I think, find the following points in it both illuminating and interesting.

There could be no doubt, his lordship said, that the offence amounted to manslaughter, according to English law; but the question raised for consideration of the Court was whether the defendant was answerable to that law, and whether there was jurisdiction to try him for that offence. The conviction of the defendant, he stated, was disputed on the ground that he was a foreigner, and the ship he commanded was a German ship, sailing from one foreign port to another on a peaceful voyage, when the collision took place, by which the deceased lost her life, and that the offence was committed upon the high seas, and without the jurisdiction of the High Court of Admiralty, whose jurisdiction had been transferred by statute to the Central Criminal Court. He then went on to say that the Prosecution relied on the following two points: (1) that although the occurrence on which the charge was founded took place on the high seas, in the sense that the place where it happened was not within the body of the country, it occurred within three miles of the English coast, and that by the law of nations the sea for a

space of three miles around the coast was part of the territory of the country whose shores it washed, and that, consequently, the *Franconia* at the time the offence was committed was in English waters, and all on board the *Franconia* at the time of the accident were subject to English laws.

(2) That although the negligence complained of happened on board a foreign ship, the death occasioned by such negligence took place on board a British vessel, and that as a British vessel was in point of law considered British territory, the offence having been completed by the death of deceased in a British ship, it must be considered as having been committed on British territory.

The Lord Chief Justice then gave his own opinion with regard to these technicalities, after which he pronounced the verdict of the Court, which was that the conviction should be quashed, there being six judges in favour of it, and seven against. His concluding remarks were as follows :

“ With regard to the assertion of the Crown that the offence was really committed on board the *Strathclyde*, which brought defendant within the jurisdiction of this country, he could not be said to have been in any sense constructively on board the *Strathclyde*, and if he was on the high seas at the time, he could not be punished for an infraction of the English laws. Yet, it could not be said that he would escape altogether ; he would be amenable to the laws of his own country, and it could not be presumed that the law of any civilized people could be so administered as to allow such an offence to pass without adequate punishment.”

Thus Keyne escaped justice in this country ; and as no one even took the suggestion that his own countrymen would bring him to book, seriously, we may presume that he got off scot-free, the affair ending in a fiasco.

However, why the *Franconia* should have tried to cross the track of the *Strathclyde*, contrary to the rules of the road at sea, and in the end have apparently deliberately run into her, remains a mystery.

## XXXIV

### THE COVERED FIGUREHEAD

THE *Northfleet*, a fine ship of 940 tons, built by Mr. Pitcher at Northfleet near Gravesend, either in the 'forties or 'fifties of the last century, was originally intended for Dent's china trade.\* She afterwards became the property of Mr. Duncan Dunbar, and, at his death, was sold to Messrs John Patton Junior & Co., of Liverpool and London. At the commencement of 1873 she was chartered by the firm of Edwin Clark, Punchard & Co., of Victoria Street, Westminster, contractors for the Tasmanian Main Line Railway, to convey 350 railway labourers with a few women and children to Hobart Town.

In addition to these passengers, a cargo, consisting chiefly of iron rails, was consigned to her, and her actual date of departure was fixed for Friday, January 17.

At the last moment, however, when all was ready and the ship was about to sail, her commander, Captain Oats, was served with a Treasury warrant of subpœna to attend the Tichborne Trial, it being understood that he was the last person to see the real Roger Tichborne just before that individual

\* *Illustrated London News*, February 1, 1873.



THE "NORTHFLEET" AT GRAVESEND THE DAY BEFORE SHE SAILED

*Illustration of the "Northfleet" at Gravesend, 1872*





left Rio. It was then that Messrs Patton, having complete confidence in Mr. Knowles, chief officer of the *Northfleet*, appointed him in Captain Oats's place; and the ship sailed, after all, according to scheduled time.

It was a queer coincidence that Captain Knowles should have been born at Gravesend, close to where the *Northfleet* was built, just about the time she was constructed. Fate seemed to have brought them together. Only thirty-three years of age, he was the son of Mr. Knowles of Northwich, Cheshire, and grandson of the late Mr. Charles Knowles, Magistrate's Clerk of Manchester. On December 4, 1872, he married Miss Frederica Markham, a pretty girl of twenty-four, and his employers allowed him to take her with him on the voyage in question. Besides Captain and Mrs. Knowles, and the 350 railway labourers and a few women and children belonging to them, there were on board the *Northfleet* at the moment of departure, forty crew, making in all about 400.

After leaving Gravesend, on Friday, the ship encountered very stormy weather, and Knowles, on arriving off the North Foreland, anchored under it, until the following Tuesday. It was while he was there, that the owners received a letter from him saying that the ship's surgeon was just then having a very busy time of it with the seasick women and children. On Tuesday, the weather improving, the *Northfleet* weighed anchor, and continuing her journey was reported at Lloyd's as having passed Deal "all well." On Wednesday, at sunset, she anchored again off Dungeness, about two miles from shore, in

eleven fathoms, between 1 and 2 batteries, that is to say, almost directly opposite the coastguard station. About 10 p.m. the ship was made all taut and comfortable for the night, lights were fully displayed, and the watch set. Most of the emigrants had turned into bed, but a few were still playing cards and chattering and laughing. At about 10.20 the ship's doctor visited their quarters and ordered them all to turn in. Ten minutes later, as bells were striking the half-hour past ten, the men on watch on deck suddenly perceived a large, two-masted steamer, outward bound too, coming towards them through the gloom. As she was close to, and moving at full speed, they yelled to her to alter her course, one of them blowing a whistle. She took no notice, however, but rushing on, crashed into the *Northfleet* with her huge, straight stern, striking her broadside, almost amidship, and making a fearful breach in her timbers beneath the water-line. During the next few seconds some of the crew of the *Northfleet* heard the sailors on the strange vessel call to one another in a foreign tongue, and then saw them pick up a big piece of tarpaulin \* and throw it over the figure-head of the ship, so as to conceal her name. The mate of the *Northfleet* and certain of the passengers and crew, too, shrieked out to the foreign sailors to stand by and save them, but again no notice whatever was taken of their entreaties. The strange steamer simply backed, and having got free of the *Northfleet*, immediately steamed away and left her to her fate.

A terrible panic ensued on the *Northfleet*. Some of the passengers, tumbling out of their berths, came

\* *Perils of the Deep*, by E. N. Hoare, published 1885.

rushing up on deck like lunatics, while others remained below, groaning and moaning, and saying they might as well be drowned down there together, as in the black, raging depths outside. On deck all was pandemonium, women in their night attire clinging on to anyone and anything, children racing about everywhere, crying, yelling and getting in every one's way, whilst their parents, almost mad with terror, ran hither and thither, shrieking and looking for them.

Amid this general horror, which seemed to be only accentuated by the banging of rockets, the flaring of lights, and the whistling and howling of the wind, one man at least, namely Captain Knowles, kept wonderfully calm. The moment the accident occurred he ordered all the usual danger signals to be given, blue lights to be burned, rockets to be sent up,\* and the ship's bells to be rung, and after that he ordered the boats to be got ready. However, no sooner was the last order carried out than there was a regular *sauve qui peut* rush, which Knowles met, revolver in hand, and with these simple words, "Back, boys ; women and children first."

All the men obeyed but a seaman called Thomas Biddles, whom Knowles promptly shot in the knee. Though the water was now pouring over the bulwarks, and the confusion, in consequence, increased, Knowles managed to get a number of people, including his wife, into the long boat. The boatswain, swearing to protect Mrs. Knowles with his life, was then put in charge of her. However, through being launched too suddenly, so great was the anxiety to get her clear of the ship before the latter sank, she came

\* *Illustrated London News*, February 1, 1873.

to grief—a rebound against the side of the vessel resulted in her own side being smashed in.

And had not the *City of London* steam tug, seeing the signals of distress, at once made for the spot, and commenced the work of rescue, poor Mrs. Knowles and all on board the long boat would have perished. Fortunately, all but a very few were saved. Soon after this, those on the tug saw by the lights from their own ship and the rockets the *Northfleet* was still sending up, the figurehead of the latter vessel suddenly sink and her stern rise, and immediately afterwards she disappeared from view with a hideous rushing noise,\* amid the most awful and heartrending shrieks. The sea being only about sixty feet deep there, the tops of the masts remained out of the water, and some of the crew saved themselves by clinging to the riggings. The majority of people on board, however, either went down with the hull or were left struggling in the waves. A few of the more fortunate of the latter managed to reach barrels or other floating objects, to which they clung till rescued by the pilot cutter *Princess*, the steam tug *City of London*, and the Kingsdown lugger *Mary*. Eighty-six in all were rescued. The Captain and all the officers remained at their posts till the very last, and were drowned, a fine example of British heroism and devotion to duty. The pilot and ten of the seamen, who also stood by the ship, were eventually rescued from the mizenmast, to which they had clung for two and a half hours.

The tragedy created a great sensation and aroused much sympathy. The Lord Mayor of London at

\* *Illustrated London News*, February 1, 1876.

once opened a subscription for the widows and orphans of the drowned, and among the subscribers were Queen Victoria, who gave two hundred guineas, Samuel Morley, M.P., the Sheriff of London, and Thomas Baring, M.P.

One of the survivors, Maria Taplin, a little girl of ten, both of whose parents, and brother, and sister, had perished in the catastrophe, was adopted by Mrs. Forster, sister of the Belgian Consul at Dover. Queen Victoria sent a message of kind inquiry to Mrs. Knowles, who informed Messrs Pattons, the owners of the *Northfleet*, and others who condoled with her, that it was a great comfort to her in her grief to know how much her husband was esteemed.

Such is the actual story of the disaster. There were, however, some very remarkable features about it. First of all it happened close to land and was actually witnessed by the chief coast-guard officer.

His statement was extraordinary. He said he was on duty at the Dungeness coast-guard station the night of the tragedy. It was a starless night, and very dark and showery. While he was on the look out he suddenly saw rockets coming from out at sea. Not knowing what they were being fired for he went for his telescope, and on his return with it, they had ceased, and everything was dark and still again. In the morning when he looked out he realized there had been a wreck, because the spars and topmast of a vessel were visible above the water, which was at low tide.

What an admission! This coast-guard, whose special duty it was to look out for wrecks, saw one of great magnitude and most disastrous in its consequences take place under his very nose and didn't



realize what was happening! It seems incredible, absolutely incredible, when we remember that all the while blue lights were burning and rockets were being sent up. Because, for what could he have thought these signals were being used, if not for a catastrophe of some kind? Had he only exercised some little common sense and warned the nearest life-boat station, it is quite possible many more lives might have been saved. But he was not the only one who saw and heard the distress signals and failed to recognize them as such. At the time of the collision there were nearly one hundred ships, all with their lights burning brilliantly, at anchor in the roadstead, and all heard, and, probably, most of them saw the rockets; but they took no notice whatever of them, thinking, as they subsequently declared, that they were signals for a pilot.

One of these ships, the *Corona*, an Australian clipper, chartered by Messrs George Thompson Junior & Co., of Leadenhall Street, London, E.C., was lying at anchor only 300 yards away; and the watch on her deck not only must have heard the rockets very plainly, but they must have heard also, unless they were all asleep, which is incredible, the terrific noise of the impact, when the collision occurred; the cries for help that followed, and the heartrending shrieks of those left on board, when the doomed vessel actually went under. Had this vessel alone rendered aid, every one on the *Northfleet* might have been saved, for the night, though squally, was not so rough as to prevent a ship's boats weathering both wind and waves. It is almost incredible that those in charge of the *Corona*, as well as those in charge of other



ships in the roadstead, upon hearing the distress signals should have neglected to inquire into the meaning of them, and the case is one, I believe, without a parallel in the annals of the British Mercantile Marine.

An equally strange feature in the wreck of the *Northfleet* was the subsequent behaviour of the vessel that ran her down. There is no reason, in this instance, to suppose that the colliding vessel intended to collide, the collision, presumably, was an accident, but an accident due to the very grossest, most culpable carelessness.

Like all the other ships in the roadstead the *Northfleet* had her lights burning brilliantly, therefore the strange vessel must have seen her. She could not have done otherwise; therefore, as I have said, the collision was due to sheer negligence and bad seamanship. But that was not the worst. Directly the collision occurred, the stranger, covering up her figurehead in order to prevent identification, made off. Could anything have been more dastardly and more criminal?

Those on board the *Northfleet* heard the crew talking in a foreign language, but even though they had not, one would have sworn she was not British, because it would have been impossible for any British ship, whether lordly liner or lowly tramp, to have behaved in such a fashion. The escutcheon of the British Mercantile Marine has no such spots. In this particular case suspicion rested on the Spanish. The *Avoca*, a Dublin vessel, reported seeing a big screw steamer \* in a somewhat disabled

\* *Illustrated London News*, February 1, 1876.

condition, an hour or so after the disaster, making for Havre ; and, apparently, there were good grounds for believing that this steamer was the *Murillo*, a Spanish ship, returning to Lisbon with a cargo of iron rails and other merchandise. The *Murillo* had, it was known, touched at Dover on the Wednesday evening, several hours before the collision, and had there landed her owner and the pilot, after which she had proceeded along the Channel towards her destination.

Upon hearing that his vessel was suspected, the owner indignantly declared that such conduct on the part of his Captain was quite unthinkable. He said that, in the first place, his Captain was a very careful sailor, not at all the kind of man to incur a disaster of that kind, and that if he had by any strange chance run into the *Northfleet* he would undoubtedly have stood by her afterwards, unless, of course, his ship had been seriously damaged too, in which case she would have sunk almost at once, as her hull was very thin. Mr. Forster, the Belgian Consul at Dover, believing that what her owner had stated was true, did not think the *Murillo* guilty, and declared that the *Pelayo*, another Spanish steamer, which had cleared the Scheldt *en route* for Havana, and whose Captain was a man named Tribas, was far more likely to have been the culprit. Hence the British Government, unable to prove the identification of the vessel, sought a way out of the difficulty by offering a reward of £100 for definite information on that point. The reward, however, was never claimed, and the question, officially at least, remains unanswered \* to this day.

\* Public opinion always maintained it was the *Murillo*.

PART VII

MONSTERS OF THE DEEP



## XXXV

### THE SEA SERPENT

FEW mysteries of the sea have aroused more profound interest or stirred the imagination to greater depths than those, the reports of which have, from time to time, got into circulation, relating to the seeing of a strange unclassified creature in the sea, in appearance something like a gigantic serpent. That much fable and exaggeration has been interwoven with the history of the sea serpent no one can deny, and for that reason the briefest reference to the earliest accounts of it will be given here. The Ancients undoubtedly included in their category of great sea serpents the larger order of whales, sharks, and seals, and, in fact, any other marine monster with which they were unacquainted; their lack of knowledge of these creatures causing them to regard the same with an almost unique degree of superstitious dread.

In the works of the early Scandinavian writers there are constant allusions to sea monsters resembling gigantic snakes. Olaus Magnus\* describes the

\* In his *Histor Septentrionalis*, Chap. XXVII., published sixteenth century.

monster as being 200 ft. long, and 20 ft. round, with a mane 2 ft. long. He says it is covered with scales, has fiery eyes, and rising up out of the sea like a mast occasionally snaps up men from the decks of ships.

Aldrovanus, who quotes Olaus Magnus, remarks that round about Norway there is a great snake 200 ft. long that sometimes in very calm weather involves ships in its coils, and sinks them, and also devours their crews. For these reasons, he explains, Norwegian fishermen dread them, and enough to make them, too !

Arndt Bersen,\* another old Scandinavian writer, says the sea serpent, as well as the Tvold whale, occasionally kills men and sinks ships. However, the first person, perhaps, seriously to command attention with allusions to this monster is Bishop Hans Egede, the well-known missionary.

He affirms † that on July 6, 1734, he saw, off the coast of Greenland, a monster of the serpent species, with a tail a whole ship's length. Its head, when raised out of the sea, was on a level with the top of the ship's mainmast. Its snout was long and sharp, and it blew like a whale. It had large broad paws ; its body was covered with scales ; its skin was rough and uneven ; but, in other respects, it was like a serpent, and when it dived, its tail was raised in the air. Referring to it again in another of his works, he says its body was as big in circumference as the ship he was sailing in.

\* In his *Fertility of Denmark and Norway*.

† *Full and particular Relation of my Voyage to Greenland as a Missionary in the year 1734*, by Hans Egede.

Bishop Eric Pontoppidan of Bergen, in his *Natural History of Norway*,\* “discredited such things as sea serpents, till that suspicion was removed by full and sufficient evidence from creditable and experienced fishermen and sailors in Norway, of which there are hundreds who can testify that they have seen them.” He adds that the North Traders who visited Bergen every year with their merchandise from abroad thought it as ridiculous to be asked if they believed in sea serpents, as it would be if they were asked did they believe in eels or cod. Pontoppidan thought sea serpents usually remained at the bottom of the sea, only coming up to the surface in very hot weather in July and August, which was their spawning time.

He gives a drawing of a Norwegian sea serpent made for him by the Rev. Hans Strom, who did it from the description given him by two reputable people residing at Herroe, who had actually seen the creature. He then goes on to quote an extraordinary adventure Lawrance de Ferry, a Captain in the Norwegian Navy and Commander in Bergen, had with the monster near Molde in August, 1747. De Ferry’s statement made before a magistrate was confirmed on oath by two of the crew he had with him at the time. What happened was this :

One day towards the end of August, 1746, de Ferry was sitting reading in a boat that was being rowed by eight of his men. The boat was at Jule-Naefs, about six miles from Molde. Hearing the men suddenly begin to murmur, and noticing the man steering was keeping well away from land, de Ferry asked what was the matter, whereupon to his amaze-

\* Published 1755.



ment they told him it was a serpent. Being anxious to see a monster he had heard so much about, he at once ordered them to approach it, which they did, as can readily be imagined, however, with great reluctance. While they were tacking to get near it, de Ferry saw the creature swimming at a great pace, and, picking up a gun, he fired at it. It immediately dived and disappeared. Thinking it might appear again he ordered his men to rest upon their oars and wait. While they did so, he noticed the water at the spot where the serpent had been was red and thick, and he thus concluded he had wounded it. According to his description, the head of the creature, which appeared about 2 ft. above the water, resembled that of a horse. It was grey; its mouth was black and very big; and it had a long white mane. As it swam it displayed about eight folds or coils, each about a fathom apart. Here de Ferry's account terminates. Pontoppidan was convinced of its veracity. He declares in the same work that the skin of the Norwegian serpent is invariably smooth as glass, excepting for the mane round the neck. In this respect, he adds, it would appear to differ from the one seen in Greenland waters by Egede. Going on, he tells us further interesting details, as, for instance, the body of the Norwegian serpent is remarkably small where the tail begins. It, the tail, does not gradually taper to a point like the eel. The head always has a high, broad forehead; sometimes a pointed snout, while, at other times, the face is fashioned like that of a cow or horse with big nostrils and kind of whiskers. Its eyes, which are very big, are blue, in contrast to the colour of the body, which

is of a dark brown, speckled with light streaks or spots "that shine like tortoiseshell." He further adds, and this is in direct opposition to a statement made by Professor Owen,\* that carcasses of it have, from time to time, been found at Amunds Vaagen in the Nordfiord and on the Island of Karmen.

From Pontoppidan's time onward in the various newspapers and magazines of countries on both sides of the Atlantic there appears, at frequent intervals, the account of a sea serpent having been seen, and in most of these accounts, given first hand, there is a clearness and precision that is most marked and convincing.

In 1806 a sea serpent was stated to have appeared off the coast of the United States, while considerable excitement was caused in 1808 in Natural History circles in Great Britain, by reports of a sea serpent having come ashore on Stronsay. The *Annual Register* for November 18, 1808, contains the following brief reference to it :

"A sea snake, 60 ft. long, being the second of the kind ever seen, has been driven ashore on the estate of M. Laing, Esq. (at Stronsay), in one of the Orkney Islands."

Other contemporary journals and works gave detailed reports of it, with the result that a dispute ensued in the various scientific circles in London and Edinburgh as to the classification of the monster. While Dr. Barclay, reputed to be one of the ablest

\* Professor Owen said one proof of the non-existence of the sea serpent lay in no carcass of it ever having been found. See discussion in *Times* and *Illustrated London News*, October, 1848.

anatomists of his day, expressed his belief that the creature belonged to the marine serpent species, Sir Evered Home declared it to be a basking shark of uncommon dimensions.\* And so the matter rested, some participating in the view of the one, and some upholding the opinion of the other expert. Any sailor accustomed to travel in shark-haunted waters could, probably, have settled the question once and for all, but such is the quite pathetic reverence for big names in this country, and not, perhaps, in this country only, that an opinion from so humble a quarter, though obviously invaluable, was never sought.

After an interval of some few years we again hear of a thing supposed to be a sea serpent appearing many times during the summer of 1817, near Cape Ann, Massachusetts. The Linnæan Society of New England published accounts of it, and considerable trouble was taken in getting reliable testimony. Eleven eye-witnesses, persons of good repute, certified on oath before magistrates, one of whom had seen the monster himself and was so able to corroborate certain important details in the statements. Indeed, it is most interesting to note the points on which they were all agreed. For instance, they all agreed that it was serpent-like in shape, about 60 ft. in length, maneless, and caterpillar-like in its movements. They were not, however, agreed on certain other points. Whereas some were of the opinion that it was mottled, dark brown and white, others declared it was all of one hue, namely, dark brown, saving on the lower part of its head and under its neck,

\* Most scientists subsequently held this view.

which parts, they affirmed, were white. Its head was compared with that of a sea turtle, a rattlesnake, and a serpent. Five witnesses said it had dorsal protuberances, four declared its body was straight, and two were unable to form any opinion on that particular point.

Years later, that is to say, in 1848, the *Dædalus* controversy drew from the Hon. T. H. Perkins, one of the eleven witnesses referred to above, a long account of his experience with the monster in 1817. The account, which was a reproduction of a letter he wrote to a friend in 1820, appeared in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, for November 25, 1848.

Colonel Perkins was seated with his friend, Mr. Lee, at the time of the occurrence, on a point of land projecting into Gloucester Harbour, and about 20 ft. above the level of the water, from which they were some 60 ft. away. Perceiving something like a huge snake in the water, Colonel Perkins gave a loud exclamation, and, to quote his own words :

“ A few minutes later I saw on the opposite side of the harbour, at about two miles’ distance from where I had first seen, or thought I saw, the snake, the same object moving with a rapid motion up the harbour on the western shore. As it approached us, it was easy to see that its motion was not that of the common snake, either on the land or in the water, but evidently the vertical movement of the caterpillar. As nearly as I could judge, there was visible at a time about 40 ft. of its body. It was not, to be sure, a continuity of body, as the form from head to tail (except, as the apparent bunches appeared, as it moved through

the water), was seen only at 3 or 4 ft. asunder. It was very evident, however, that its length must have been greater than what it appeared, as, in its movement, it left a considerable wake in its rear. I had a fine glass, and was within one-third to half a mile of it. The head was flat in the water, and the animal was, as far as I could distinguish, of a chocolate colour. I was struck with an appearance in the front part of the head like a single horn, about nine inches to a foot in length, and of the form of a marling-spike. There were a great many people collected by this time, many of whom had before seen the same object and the same appearance. From the time I first saw it, until it passed by the place where I stood, and soon after disappeared, was not more than fifteen or twenty minutes. I left the place fully satisfied that the reports in circulation, although differing in details, were essentially correct."

Colonel Perkins went on to say he talked with many people who had seen the serpent, and among them a man called Mansfield, a greatly respected inhabitant of Gloucester. Mr. Mansfield told him that, when out driving one morning with his wife, they had both seen it in Gloucester Harbour. It was stretched out, some part being over the white sandy beach, which had about 5 ft. of water on it, and the rest of it in deep water. Mr. Mansfield and his wife both agreed it was about 100 ft. long. Colonel Perkins adds that the same creature was seen by the crews of several of the vessels coasting near Gloucester, and the skipper of one of them, named Tappan, also saw a thing like a horn on the monster's head, which he, subsequently, con-



cluded must have been its tongue, thrown in an upright position from its head.

A revenue cutter also had an excellent view of the monster one day.

We do not hear of a sea serpent being seen again, not at least on any very reliable testimony, till 1826. On this occasion it was seen from the deck of the *Silas Richards* by several people, including the Captain, who forwarded the following graphic account of it to the *Annual Register* : \*

“ Ship, *Silas Richards*, June 17, 1826. Lat. 41.03, long. 67.32. While standing on the starboard bow, looking at the unruffled surface of the ocean, about 6 o'clock p.m., I perceived a sudden perturbation of the water, and immediately an object presented itself, with its head about 4 ft. above the level, which position it retained for nearly a minute, when it returned to the surface, and kept approaching abreast of the vessel at a distance of about 50 yards. I immediately called to the passengers on deck, several of whom observed it for the space of 8 minutes, as it glided along slowly, and undauntedly passed the ship at the rate of about 3 miles an hour. Its colour was a dark, dingy black with protuberances ; its visible length appeared about 60 ft., and its circumference 10 ft. With former accounts which have been given of such a monster, and which have never been credited, this exactly corresponds, and I have no doubt but it is one of those species called sea serpents ; it made a considerable wake in the water in its progress.”

This document is signed by Henry Holdredge, Captain of the *Silas Richards*, and attested by

\* July 1, 1826.

W. Warburton of Pentonville, England, Duncan Kennedy and Thomas Austen of Clifton, England, Lovell Purdy, Thomas Siveter and James Magee of New York, all passengers on board the *Silas Richards*.

The very next year we again hear of a sea serpent being seen,\* and from the descriptions of it given, it appears to have been either the same monster as that seen the previous year, or one very similar to it. It appeared several times the same week. On August 22, 1827, it was seen, for instance, off the *Nas* and *Lysager*; and at about 10 a.m. on August 24, 1827, the weather at the time being calm and clear, five people saw it simultaneously in the *Bonnefiord*. They described it as follows :

Its body, they said, had at least ten arched elevations or bends, about twenty ells from each other, the whole length, probably being 260 or 280 ells. Its body was about as thick as a water butt, and the colour of its head, which was plainly discernible, either black or nearly black. No tail was visible. As it swam along its body bent up and down in frequent motion, and it made a curious "rushing noise," distinctly audible to those on shore. It was seen again two days later, at 7 a.m., passing the *Lund* and *Hoved Isles*. Statements signed by eye-witnesses were sent to the police of *Christiania*, and the *Norwegian Government* actually offered a reward for the destruction of the creature.

Two years later, that is to say in 1829, Mr. R. Davidson, Superintending Surgeon of the *Nagpore Subsidiary Force*, *Kamptee*, had an experience † with

\* *Annual Register*, September 16, 1827.

† *Bombay Bi-monthly Times*, January, 1849.



a creature he believed to be a serpent, when returning to India on board the *Royal Saxon*. He was standing, at noon, one day on the poop of the vessel, conversing with her commander, Captain Petrie. They were at the time some considerable distance south-west of the Cape of Good Hope, travelling at about eight knots an hour, when, to their amazement, they saw the head and about one-third of the upper part of the body of a huge creature swimming along in the sea. It passed within 25 yards of the ship, and as it came abreast of them, it slowly looked round at them. Then, continuing its course, it moved away astern, eventually disappearing in the distance. Neither of those watching it spoke till that happened, when the Captain, turning to Mr. Davidson, exclaimed, "Good heavens ! What can that be ? "

The man at the wheel and a steerage passenger, who happened to be on deck at the time, also saw the thing. Mr. Davidson was convinced it was a serpent, rather bigger, perhaps, than the one Captain M'Intire subsequently saw (in 1848) from the deck of the *Dædalus*, but probably belonging to a similar species. Mr. Davidson totally disagreed with Professor Owen's theory that the thing Captain M'Intire saw was a big seal.

There do not seem to be many authentic accounts of the appearance of any sea serpents during the early 'thirties of the last century. The following, although it occurred in 1833, was not published till 1847. It appeared in the *Zoologist* of that year.

"On May 15, 1833, a party, consisting of Captain Sullivan, Lieutenants Maclachlan and Malcolm of the

Rifle Brigade, Lieutenant Lyster of the Artillery, and Mr. Ince of the Ordnance, started from Halifax in a small yacht for Mahone Bay, some forty miles eastward, on a fishing excursion. The morning was cloudy, and the wind at S.S.E., and, apparently, rising; by the time we reached Chebucto Head, as we had taken no pilot with us, we deliberated whether we should proceed or turn back; but, after a consultation, we determined on the former, having lots of ports on our lee. Previous to our leaving town, an old man-of-war's man we had along with us, busied himself in inquiries as to our right course; he was told to take his departure from the Bull Rock off Pennant Point, and a W.N.W. course would bring us direct on Iron Bound Island, at the entrance of Mahone or Mechlenburgh Bay; he, however, unfortunately told us to steer W.S.W., nor corrected his error for five or six hours; consequently we had gone a long distance off the coast.

“We had run about half the distance, as we supposed, and were enjoying ourselves on deck, smoking our cigars, and getting our tackle ready for the approaching campaign against the salmon, when we were surprised by the sight of an immense shoal of grampuses, which appeared in an unusual state of excitement, and which, in their gambols approached so close to our little craft, that some of the party amused themselves by firing at them with rifles; at this time we were jogging on at about five miles an hour, and must have been crossing Margaret's Bay. I merely conjecture where we were, as we had not seen land since a short time after leaving Pennant Bay. Our attention was presently diverted from the whales and ‘such small deer’ by an exclamation from Dowling, our man-of-war's man, who was sitting to leeward, of ‘Oh, sirs, look here!’ We

were startled into a ready compliance, and saw an object which banished all other thoughts, save wonder and surprise.

“At the distance of from 150 to 200 yards on our starboard bow, we saw the head and neck of some denizen of the deep, precisely like those of a common snake, in the act of swimming, the head so far elevated and thrown forward by the curve of the neck, as to enable us to see the water under and beyond it. The creature rapidly passed, leaving a regular wake, from the commencement of which to the fore part, which was out of water, we judged its length to be about 85 ft., and this within rather than beyond the mark. We were, of course, all taken aback with the sight, and with staring eyes and in speechless wonder sat gazing at it for full half a minute. There could be no mistake, no delusion, and we were all perfectly satisfied that we had been favoured with a view of the ‘true and veritable sea serpent,’ which had been generally considered to have existed only in the brain of some Yankee skipper, and treated as a tale not much entitled to belief. Dowling’s exclamation is worthy of record.

“‘Well,’ he said, ‘I’ve sailed in all parts of the world and have seen rum sights too in my time, but this is the queerest thing I ever did see.’ And surely Jack Dowling was right.

“It is most difficult to give correctly the dimensions of any object in the water. The head of the creature we set down at about 6 ft. in length, and that portion of the neck we saw at the same; the extreme length, as before stated, at between 80 and 100 ft. The neck in thickness equalled the bole of a moderate-sized tree. The head and neck of a dark brown or nearly black colour, streaked with white in irregular streaks. I do not recollect seeing any parts of the

body. Such is the rough account of the sea serpent, and all the party who saw it are still in the land of the living—Lyster in England, Malcolm in New South Wales with his regiment, and the remainder still vegetating in Halifax.”

Then follow the signatures of the eye-witnesses. Thus :

W. Sullivan, Capt., Rifle Brigade.

A. Maclachlan, Lieut., „

G. V. Malcolm, Ensign, „

B. O’Neal Lyster, Lieut., Artillery.

Henry Ince, Ordnance Store-keeper at Halifax.

During the years 1836–38 a creature believed to be a sea serpent was seen frequently at various points along the North American coast, and in 1840 one appeared again to a ship’s crew at sea.

Captain D’Abnour, Commander of the said ship *Ville de Rochefort*, made the following statement regarding the monster.\* He said on April 21, 1840, the *Ville de Rochefort* was in 24 deg. 13 min. N. latitude, and 89 deg. 52 min. W. longitude (calculated from the meridian of Paris), that is to say, in the Gulf of Mexico. They were running under a light breeze from E.N.E., and the weather was beautiful. Suddenly, while gazing over the water, his attention and the attention, also, of others on deck was attracted by something like a long chain of rocks, falling off by a gentle inclination at the two extremities, and elevated at the middle by only a few feet over the level of the sea. The sea was breaking gently against it. As the vessel drew nearer to the object, the latter changed its form and position, thus proving it was

\* *Annual Register*, September 7, 1840.

not a reef, but something alive. On getting nearer still to it, Captain D'Abnour and those with him at the time were able to distinguish with the aid of a telescope a "long chain of enormous rings, resembling a number of barrels linked together, and in form very like the back of a silkworm," and presently, on approaching closer, they saw, to their amazement, the extremity of what looked like an enormous tail, "longitudinally divided into two sections, white and black." The tail seemed to wind itself up, and to be resting on a portion of the creature itself. At the opposite extremity of the thing there was a curious kind of membrane "rising to the height of about two feet from the water, and inclining itself at a considerable angle upon the mass (without leaving it, however), and this led the eye-witnesses to infer that, very possibly, the creature had an apparatus for the purpose of respiration, like the lampreys.

While they were all gazing at it with the greatest interest and curiosity, they saw something like a great antenna terminating in "a crescent of at least 5 ft. from one extremity to the other," rise out of the water to a height of nearly 8 ft. "We could not," Captain D'Abnour concludes, "approach sufficiently near\* to acquire any very positive idea as to what we had seen; but everything led us to believe that it was an enormous serpent of at least 100 metres in length."

During the years 1845 to 1849, supposed sea serpents were constantly seen off the Norwegian coast. In 1846, for example, the Rev. P. W. Deinboll,

\* He does not explain why.



Archdeacon of Molde, published in the Press the following statement : \*

“ On July 28, 1845, J. C. Lund, bookseller and printer, G. S. Krogh, merchant, Christian Flang, Lund's apprentice, and John Elgeuse, labourer, were out on Ronesdal-fjord fishing. The sea was, after a warm sunshiny day, quite calm. About 7 o'clock in the afternoon, a little distance from shore, near the ballast place and Molde Hooe, they saw a large marine animal, which slowly moved itself forward, as it appeared to them, with the help of two fins, on the fore-part of the body nearest the head, which they judged from the boiling of the water at both sides of it. The visible part of the body appeared to be between 40 and 50 ft. in length, and it moved in undulations like a snake. The body was round and of a dark colour, and seemed to be several ells † in thickness. As they discerned a ruffled motion in the water behind the animal, they concluded that part of the body was concealed under water. That it was one connected animal, they saw plainly from its movement. When the animal was about 100 yards from the boat, they discerned tolerably clearly its fore-part, which ended in a sharp snout; its colossal head raised itself above the water in the form of a semi-circle, the lower part was not visible. The colour of the head was dark brown and the skin smooth. They did not notice the eyes, or any mane or bristles on the throat.

“ When the serpent came about a musket shot near, Lund fired at it, and was certain that the shot hit it in the head. After the shot he dived, but came up immediately. He raised his head like a snake pre-

\* P. 302, *The Romance of Natural History*, by P. H. Goose, F.R.S.

† An ell = 2 feet.



paring to dart on its prey. After he had turned and got his body in a straight line, which he appeared to do with great difficulty, he darted like an arrow against the boat. They reached the shore, and the animal perceiving it had come in shallow water, dived immediately and disappeared in the deep. Such, Mr. Deinboll adds, is the declaration of these four men, and no one has any cause to doubt their veracity, or imagine that they were so seized with fear that they could not observe what took place so near shore.

“There are not many here, or on other parts of the Norwegian coast, who longer doubt the existence of the sea serpent. The writer of this narrative was a long time sceptical, as he had not been so fortunate as to see this monster of the deep; but after the many accounts he has read, and the relations he has received from creditable witnesses, he does not dare longer to doubt the existence of the sea serpent.”

During the summer of 1846 many people of high repute and unimpeachable veracity wrote to the papers stating they had seen a marine serpent. It usually appeared in the vicinity of Christiansand and Molde, where Captain de Ferry had seen it a hundred years previously.\* As a rule it seems to have preferred the fiords to the open sea, its favourite one being that of Christiansand. It was generally seen there in the heat of the day, when the sea was perfectly calm. There was a certain unanimity of opinion as to what it was like, all agreeing that its eyes were large and glaring, its body brown and comparatively slender, and that it had a mane of long spreading hair behind the head; but, whereas some said its

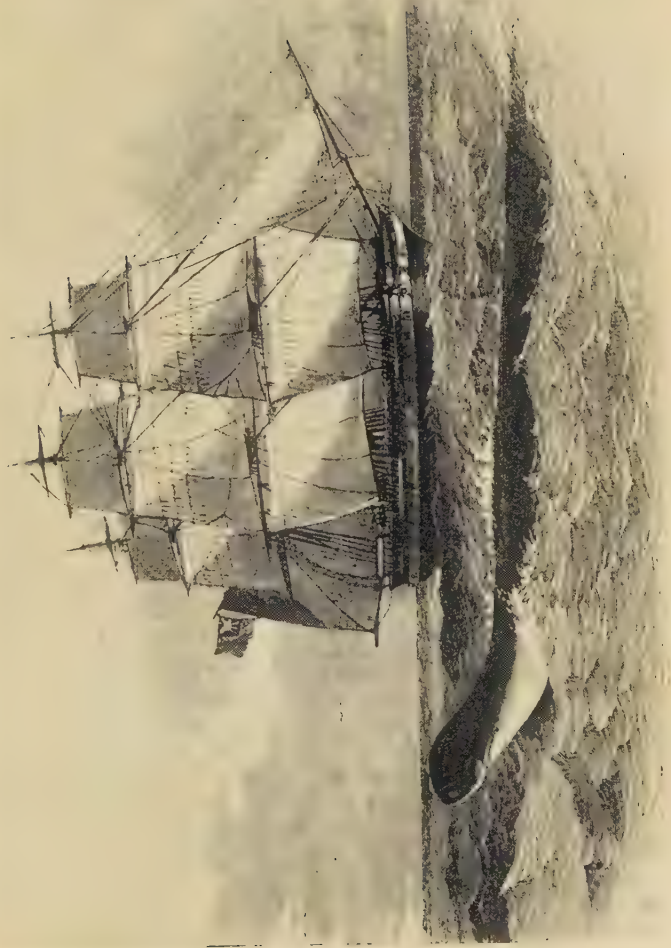
\* *Romance of Natural History*, p. 301.

head was pointed, others declared it was rounded. Its movements were generally said to be in vertical undulations.

Two years after these happenings in Norway, a great controversy regarding the existence of such creatures as sea serpents arose in the British Press, in consequence of the publishing of a letter \* written from Hamoaze by Peter M'Quhae, Captain of H.M.S. *Dædalus*, to Admiral Sir W. H. Gage, G.C.H. Devonport. The letter, dated October 11, 1848, was as follows :

“ Sir,—In reply to your letter of this day's date, requiring information as to the truth of a statement published in the *Times* newspaper of a sea serpent of extraordinary dimensions having been seen from H.M.S. *Dædalus*, under my command, on her passage from the East Indies, I have the honour to acquaint you for the information of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that at 5 o'clock p.m. on August 6 last, in latitude  $24^{\circ} 44'$  S. and longitude  $9^{\circ} 22'$  E., the weather dark and cloudy, wind fresh from the N.W., with a long ocean swell from the S.W., the ship on the port tack heading N.E. by N., something very unusual was seen by Mr. Sartoris, midshipman, rapidly approaching the ship from before the beam. The circumstance was immediately reported by him to the officer of the watch, Lieut. Edgar Drummond, with whom and Mr. William Barret, the Master, I was at the time walking the quarter-deck. The ship's company were at supper. On our attention being called to the object, it was discovered to be an enormous serpent, with head and shoulders kept about four feet constantly above the surface of the

\* *Times*, October, 1848, and *Illustrated London News*, October, 1848.



THE SEA-SERPENT WHEN FIRST SEEN FROM H.M.S. "DAEDALUS."

[From the *Illustrated London News*, Oct. 28th, 1843.]



sea, and as nearly as we could approximate by comparing it with the length of what our maintopsail yard would show on the water, there was, at the very least, 60 ft. of the animal a *fleur d'eau*, no portion of which was, to our perception, used in propelling it through the water, either by vertical or horizontal undulation. It passed rapidly, but so close under our lee quarter that, had it been a man of my acquaintance, I should easily have recognized his features with the naked eye; and it did not, either in approaching the ship, or after it had passed our wake, deviate in the slightest degree from its course to the S.W., which it held on at the pace of from 12 to 15 miles per hour, apparently on some determined purpose. The diameter of the serpent was about 15 or 16 inches behind the head, which was, without any doubt, that of a snake, and it was never, during the 20 minutes that it continued in sight of our glasses, once below the surface of the water; its colour a dark brown, with yellowish white about the throat. It had no fins, but something like the mane of a horse, or rather a bunch of seaweed, washed about its back. It was seen by the quartermaster, the boatswain's mate, and the man at the wheel, in addition to myself and officers above mentioned. I am having a drawing of the serpent made from a sketch taken immediately after it was seen, which I hope to have ready for transmission to my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty by to-morrow's post.

"I have, etc.,

"PETER M'QUHAE, Captain."

A copy of the drawing referred to above was subsequently published in the *Illustrated London News*. The appearance of this letter and drawing

in the Press immediately drew from Mr. Owen, Professor of Comparative Anatomy, a long criticism, in which he displayed his usual scepticism. He argued that the form of the head, the situation of the mouth, size and position of the eye, and colour and surface of the skin, all pointed to the creature being a warm-blooded animal, probably a very big seal, which had come down south on an iceberg, and the ice having melted it was now trying to find some other resting-place, swimming at a great pace by means of its paddles and tail. He declared that the strongest proof against the existence of such a being as a sea serpent lay in the fact that no carcase of it had as yet been seen. The fossil vertebræ and skull exhibited as such by Mr. Koch in New York and Boston were, in reality, the remains of an extinct whale. He concluded by observing, with his habitual satire, that a larger body of evidence from eye-witnesses might be got together in proofs of ghosts than of the sea serpent.

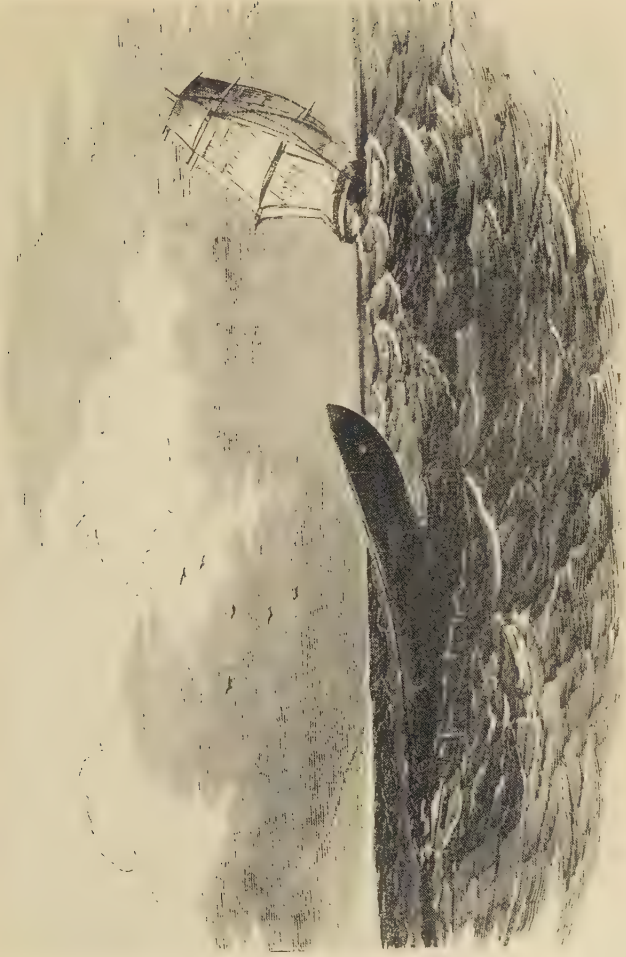
Captain M'Quhae, however, far from being squashed by the scathing remarks of the eminent scientist, stuck to his guns, and in a spirited reply published in the Press \* denied the thing he saw was either a seal, sea elephant, grampus, or great shark.

It was pronounced by all the eye-witnesses on board at the time to be a serpent.

The matter thus ended in a duel between Professor Owen and Captain M'Quhae, the one basing his opinion almost entirely on theory and study ashore, and the other on practical experience. Professor Owen's knowledge of marine animals was mainly

\* *Times*, October, 1848.





SUPPOSED APPEARANCE OF THE GREAT SEA-SERPENT, FROM H.M.S. "PLUMPER," SKETCHED BY AN OFFICER ON BOARD  
[From the *Illustration*, London, 1875]



derived from a study of their bones in museums, Captain M'Quhae's from encounters with them in the actual flesh and blood. As to which of these two men is the better fitted to pass an opinion, it is not for me but for my readers to say.

In the following year, 1849, two appearances of the monster are recorded. On the one occasion, it was seen in the Atlantic by an officer on board H.M.S. *Plumper*,\* when that vessel was between England and Portugal. It crossed the wake of the ship with its head about 8 ft. above the water, and 20 ft. of its back showing. On its back was a kind of mane. As in the case of the *Dædalus*, a description of it was sent to the Admiralty.

This same year, namely 1849, either the same creature or another of a somewhat similar species was seen off Otersoen. According to what Captain Schielderup, Postmaster of Otersoen, told Captain de Capell Brooke,† the monster appeared every day throughout the month in pretty well the same spot, the heat being intense. It lay motionless, as if dozing in the sunbeams. The first time Captain Schielderup saw it, he was on his boat, at a distance of about 200 yds. from it. He estimated its length at about 600 ft. It lay in coils, and its colour was greyish. He could not see if it had teeth or was scaly, but when it moved it made a loud crackling sound. It omitted a very offensive odour, and this was, probably, the cause of the fish leaving the bay, while it was there. None of the fishermen ever dared to approach it. Captain Schielderup added that there were thirty people

\* *Illustrated London News*, April 14, 1849.

† *Travels to the North*, A. de Brooke.

living on the island at the time, and they all saw it.

On the Island of Leko, Captain de Brooke met a young merchant called Peter Greger, who told him he, also, had seen the serpent. He saw it in August, 1848. He was mending a net at the time in company with some fishermen, and the thing appeared quite close to them. As far as he could judge, it was about six times the length of the boat, of a grey colour, and lying in coils a great height above the surface of the sea. It so frightened them all, that they got away from it as quickly as they could.

The Bishop of the Nordlands also declared he had seen not only one such creature but two ! They were swimming in the Bay of Shuresund or Sorsünd, on the Drontheim Fiord, about eight Norwegian miles from Drontheim ; he judged the length of the largest to be about 100 ft. They were dark grey.

He furthermore added that one, a quarter of a mile long and as bulky as an ox, had appeared off Soro in 1822, and been seen by many people, collectively.

The Amtinand (Governor) of Finmark likewise testified to having seen a sea serpent ; indeed, there was so much corroborative evidence with regard to these creatures that, in the end, Captain de Brooke came away fully convinced of their existence.

Three years later, that is to say in 1852, his accounts of a thing believed to be a sea serpent were published in this country, one in the *Zoologist* and the other in the *Times*. Both refer to the same incident. They are of peculiar interest inasmuch as the thing described in them possess certain new features, thereby strongly suggesting that not only one but

many species of unrecognized monsters of serpent-like form roam the unexplored depths of the sea.

The first account narrated by Lieut.-Colonel Thomas Steele of the Coldstream Guards was as follows :

“ I have lately received the following account from my brother, Captain Steele, 9th Lancers, who, on his way out to India in the *Barham*, saw the sea-serpent. Thinking it might interest you, as corroborating the account of the *Dædalus*, I have taken the liberty of sending you an extract from my brother's letter.

“ ‘ On August 28, in longitude 40° E. latitude 37° 16. S., about half-past two, we had all gone down below to get ready for dinner, when the first mate called us on deck to see a most extraordinary sight, about 500 yards from the ship there was the head and neck of an enormous snake ; we saw about sixteen or twenty feet out of the water, and he spouted a long way from his head ; down his back he had a crest like a cock's comb, and was going very slowly through the water, but left a wake about 50 or 60 ft., as if dragging a long body after him. The Captain put the ship off her course to run down to him, but as we approached him he went down. His colour was green, with light spots. He was seen by every one on board. My brother is no naturalist, and I think this is the first time the monster has ever been seen to spout.’ ”

The second account of the same creature, also in the form of a letter, ran thus :

“ You will be surprised to hear we have actually seen the great sea serpent, about which there has been so much discussion. Information was given

by a sailor to the Captain, just as we were going to dinner. I was in my cabin at the time, and from the noise and excitement I thought the ship was on fire. I rushed on deck, and, on looking over the side of the vessel, I saw a most wonderful sight, which I shall recollect as long as I live. His head appeared to be about 16 ft. above the water, and he kept moving it up and down, sometimes showing his enormous neck, which was surmounted with a huge crest in the shape of a saw. It was surrounded by hundreds of birds, and we at first thought it was a dead whale. He left a track in the wake of the boat, and from what we could see of his head and part of his body we were led to think he must be about 60 ft. in length, but he might be more. The Captain kept the vessel away to get nearer to him, and, when we were within a hundred yards, he slowly sank into the depths of the sea. While we were at dinner he was seen again."

The value of this last letter is, perhaps, enhanced owing to the fact that Mr. Alfred Newton, a well-known naturalist of those days, guaranteed the integrity of the writer.

After this I can find no account, of any consequence, with regard to any appearance of the creature, prior to December 12, 1857. On that date, at 6 p.m., it was seen, collectively, from the deck of the *Castilian* by the Commander of the vessel, Captain G. H. Harrington, and the two chief officers, Mr. W. Davies and Mr. E. Wheeler. The *Castilian*, bound from Bombay to Liverpool, was then about ten miles distant from St. Helena. The Captain describes what took place in the following words : \*

\* Entered by him in his official *Meteorological Journal* and forwarded to the Board of Trade.



“While myself and officers were standing on the lee-side of the poop, looking towards the island, we were startled by the sight of a huge marine animal which reared its head out of the water, within 20 yds. of the ship; when it suddenly disappeared for about half a minute, and then made its appearance in the same manner again—showing us distinctly its neck and head, about 10 or 12 ft. out of the water.

“Its head was shaped like a long nun-buoy; and I suppose the diameter to have been 7 or 8 ft. in the largest part, with a kind of scroll, or tuft of loose skin, encircling it about 2 ft. from the top. The water was discoloured for several hundred feet from its head; so much so, that, on its first appearance, my impression was that the ship was in broken water, produced, as I supposed, by some volcanic agency, since the last time I passed the island; but the second appearance completely dispelled these fears, and assured us that it was a monster of extraordinary length, which appeared to be moving slowly towards the land. The ship was going too fast to enable us to reach the mast-head in time to form a correct estimate of its extreme length; but, from what we saw from the deck, we concluded that it must have been over 200 ft. long.

“The boatswain and several of the crew, who observed it from the top-gallant fo’c’sle, state that it was more than double the length of the ship, in which case it must have been 500 ft. Be that as it may, I am convinced that it belonged to the serpent tribe; it was of a dark colour about the head, and was covered with several white spots.”

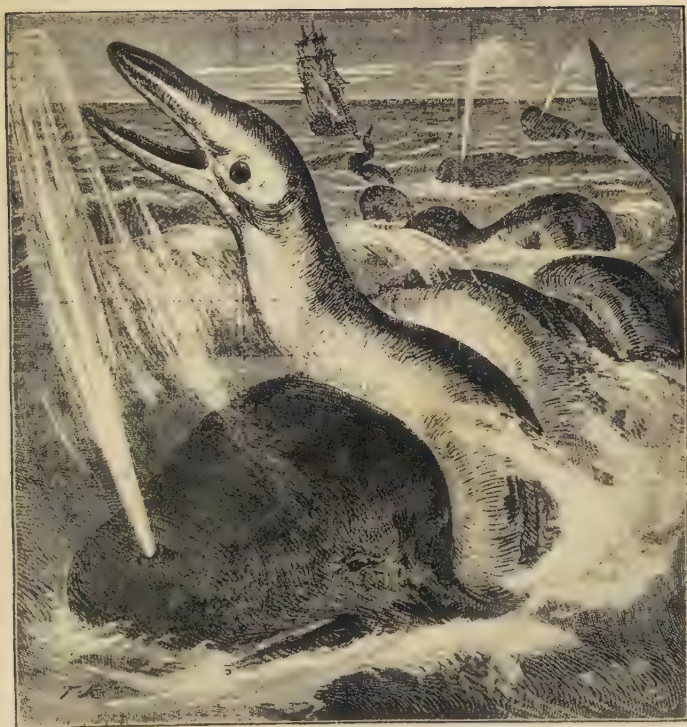
Such was Captain Harrington’s account of the much-debated sea serpent, and there can be little

doubt but that it was written in all good faith and honesty.

Apparently, a period of six years now elapses before a further appearance of a sea serpent is recorded; and it was not until May, 1863, that we again hear of a monster believed to belong to the sea serpent species appearing to several people, collectively, on board the African mail steamer *Athenian*. It was about 7 a.m. on May 6, the *Athenian* then being on her way from Teneriffe to Bathurst, that the quartermaster, John Chapple, who was at the wheel, saw something floating towards the ship. He at once called the attention of the Rev. Mr. Smith and another passenger, who were on the deck at the same time, to it, and all three gazed at it with the greatest curiosity. On its approaching nearer, it was seen to be a huge snake about 100 ft. long, and of a dark brown colour. Its head and tail were out of the water, the body slightly submerged, and on its head was something not unlike a mane. It disappeared before anyone else on the vessel saw it.

This is the only authentic instance of the appearance of the monster in the 'sixties that strikes me as being of sufficient interest to record here.

In the 'seventies, what were believed to be sea serpents were frequently seen in various places, many miles apart. On January 10, 1877, for instance, Captain Drevar, Master of the *Pauline*, accompanied by Horatio Thompson, chief officer; John Henderson Landells, second officer; William Lewarn, steward, and Owen Baker, seaman, all of the same vessel, appeared voluntarily before Mr. Raffles, a Liverpool



REAPPEARANCE OF THE GREAT SEA-SERPENT

*From a sketch by the Chaplain of H.M.S. "London," authenticated by Captain Drevar of the "Pauline" in 1875, which appeared in the Penny Illustrated Paper of Jan. 20th, 1877*



magistrate, and declared on oath they had seen a creature they thought must be the sea serpent. Their statement was as follows : \*

“ We, the undersigned officers and crew of the barque *Pauline* (of London) of Liverpool, in the County of Lancaster, in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, do solemnly and sincerely declare that on July 8, 1875, in latitude  $5^{\circ} 13'$  S. and longitude  $35^{\circ}$  W., we observed three large sperm whales, and one of them was gripped round the body with two turns of what appeared to be a huge serpent. The head and tail appeared to have a length beyond the coils of about 30 ft., and its girth 8 ft. or 9 ft. The serpent twisted its victim round and round for about 15 min., and then suddenly dragged the whale headfirst to the bottom.”

Captain Drevar, who acted as spokesman for the party, went on to state that on July 13 a similar serpent was seen twice. The first time it merely showed its head and neck a little way above the water, but on the second occasion it elevated itself perpendicularly to a height of about 60 ft. This testimony with regard to the monster was taken down in writing, and duly signed by all the members of Captain Drevar's party.

Two years later several of the Australian papers † contained accounts of a sea monster, differing to a very large extent from the sea monster seen by the captain and crew of the *Pauline*. It seems that

\* *Penny Illustrated Paper*, January 20, 1877.

† *The Australian Sketcher*, November 24, 1877, and *The Argus*, of about the same date.

Captain Nelson of the U.S.A. ship *Sacramento*, on arriving at Melbourne from New York on October 20, 1877, stated he had had an experience with an extraordinary marine creature. The incident took place on July 30, when the ship was in latitude  $31^{\circ} 59' N.$  and longitude  $37^{\circ} W.$  On that day a message was sent Captain Nelson, who was in his cabin resting, from John Hart, the man at the wheel, asking him to come on deck at once, as the sea serpent had suddenly appeared.

The Captain, being very sceptical with regard to the existence of the much-discussed monster, did not hurry, but, when he did eventually go on deck, he received something in the nature of a shock.

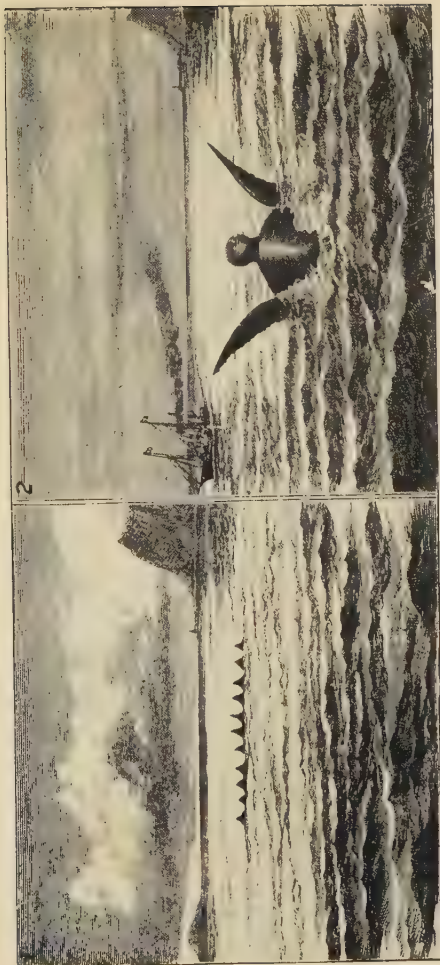
Close to the vessel, with its head raised about 3 ft. out of the water, and about 60 ft. of body showing, was a strange looking creature. Its body, which in girth was about the size of a flour barrel, was like that of a snake. It was of a reddish brown colour. Its head resembled that of a huge alligator, while its trunk appeared to be furnished with a pair of big flappers, with which, apparently, it propelled itself along. Soon after the Captain arrived on deck it slowly fell astern, and presently disappeared from sight altogether.

Hart, happening to be something of a draughtsman, made a pencil sketch of it,\* which, subsequently, appeared in the Press, and it certainly suggests to my mind some such creature as the ichthyosaurus, supposed to be long ago extinct.

A few weeks before Captain Nelson and John Hart had this extraordinary experience, Captain W. P.

\* See *Mythical Monsters*, by Chas. Gould (published 1886), p. 301.





THE ROW OF FINS AS SEEN AT FIRST

THE SEA SERPENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN—A SKETCH FROM H.M. YACHT "OSBORNE" OFF THE NORTH COAST OF SICILY ON JUNE 2ND, 1877

THE HEAD AND FLAPPERS

[From the Graphic, June 30th, 1877]



Haynes, of H.M.S. *Osborne*, saw something very different in quite another part of the world.\*

It was on June 2, 1877, when H.M.S. *Osborne* was cruising off the north coast of Sicily. Captain Haynes, on being suddenly asked by one of his officers to look about 200 yards to the beam of the vessel, saw a row of what appeared to be fins, irregular in height, and of about 40 ft. in length, moving astern in the opposite direction to that in which the *Osborne* was sailing ; and rising out of the water at one end of the fins was a bullet-shaped head, about 6 ft. thick. In striking contrast to this, the neck was slender, or, at least, comparatively so. The back again was broad, probably 20 ft. across the shoulders, and the whole body, which very possibly was 150 ft. in length, was smooth like that of a seal. The thing appeared to propel itself along with two huge flappers, which were attached to its shoulders. Captain Haynes made two drawings of the monster, and sent them, along with his description of the thing, to the *Graphic*. All he said was corroborated by the officers and crew of the *Osborne*, who were likewise eye-witnesses.

The following year, the Captain of the steamship *Durham* reported † at Wellington, New Zealand, having encountered, on February 26, a huge monster of the sea serpent species off Nerowas Island. It was snake-like in form, and about 30 ft. of its body showed above the water. His account of it was corroborated by a number of passengers and crew of the vessel, who also saw it. About the same time Captain Austin Cooper and the officers and crew of the

\* *Graphic*, June 30, 1877.

† *Singapore Daily News*, April 6, 1876.

*Carlisle Castle* also saw \* a huge snake-like creature in the sea, while nearing Melbourne. Unfortunately no details of this latter appearance are forthcoming.

According to the same authority a sea serpent was seen very distinctly some three years later off the Great Reef of New Caledonia by Commander Ville-neuve and the officers and crew of the French man-of-war *Seudre*. Indeed, it came so near to the vessel that several of those on board her ran and fetched their chassepots, but, before they could fire at it, it disappeared.

The same authority states that a sea serpent was certainly seen in the 'seventies of the last century in the Fiji Islands. He declares that Major Charles Hendry, at one time an officer in King Cakoban's army, had a very exciting experience with it. He, the major, was paddling in a canoe in Suva Bay one night, when he saw something very huge swimming through the water towards a small island containing a grotto, locally known as the "Cave of the Big Snake." The thing had a kind of mane on its head and neck, which were out of the water, while its long body, most of which seemed to be under the water, suggested that of an enormous serpent.

Major Hendry saw it very plainly, as it passed within a few yards of him, and it was a beautiful moonlight night. He admits he was alarmed, and one can well imagine it.

In January, 1879, we have another very vivid account of the monster, this time from the pen of Major † (afterwards Colonel) H. W. J. Senior, of the

\* See *Vagabond* in the Supplement to the *Australasian*, September 10, 1881.

† *Graphic*, April 19, 1879.



THE SEA SERPENT

*Marine monster seen from the S.S. "City of Baltimore" in the Gulf of Aden, Jan. 23th, 1879*

*[From the Graphic, April 19th, 1879]*





Bengal Staff Corps, who was an eye-witness. This case interested me particularly, because Major Senior lived in Clifton, and I was at the College there with his son. His account of the creature is so graphic that I will quote it in his own words :

“ On January 28, 1879,” he says, “ at about 10 a.m., I was on the poop deck of the steamship *City of Baltimore* in  $12^{\circ} 28'$  N. lat. and  $43^{\circ} 52'$  E. long. I observed a long, black object, abeam of the ship's stern on the starboard side, at a distance of about three-quarters of a mile, darting rapidly out of the water and splashing in again with a sound distinctly audible, and advancing nearer and nearer at a rapid pace. In a minute it had advanced to within half a mile, and was distinctly recognizable as the veritable ‘ sea serpent.’ I shouted out ‘ sea serpent ! sea serpent ! Call the Captain ! ’ Dr. C. Hall, the ship's surgeon, who was reading on deck, jumped up in time to see the monster, as, also, did Mrs. Greenfield, one of the passengers on board. ‘ By this time it was only about 500 yards off, and a little in the rear, owing to the vessel then steaming at the rate of about ten knots an hour in a westerly direction. On approaching the wake of the ship, the serpent turned its course a little away, and was soon lost to view in the blaze of sunlight reflected on the waves of the sea. So rapid were its movements that, when it approached the ship's wake, I seized a telescope, but could not catch a view, as it darted rapidly out of the field of the glass before I could see it. I was thus prevented from ascertaining whether it had scales or not, but the best view of the monster obtainable, when it was about three cable lengths away, that is about 500 yards distant, seemed to show it was without scales. I cannot speak with certainty. The head

and neck, about 2 ft. in diameter, rose out of the water to a height of about 20 or 30 ft., and the monster opened its jaws wide as it rose, and closed them again, as it lowered its head and darted forward for a dive, reappearing almost immediately some 100 yards ahead. The body was not visible at all, and must have been some depth under water, as the disturbance on the surface was too slight to attract notice, although, occasionally, a splash was seen at some distance behind the head. The shape of the head was not unlike pictures of the dragon I have often seen, with a bull-dog appearance on the forehead and eyebrow. When the monster had drawn its head sufficiently out of the water, it let itself drop, as it were, like a huge log of wood, prior to darting forward under the water. This motion caused a splash of about 15 ft. in height on either side of the neck, much in the shape of a pair of wings."

This account is duly signed by Major Senior and the other eye-witnesses of the incident.

About seven months after Major Senior's experience what was supposed to be a sea serpent was seen by Captain Davison and the chief officer of the steamship *Kiushiu-Maru*,\* belonging to the well-known Japanese Mitsu Bish Company. At 11.15 a.m. on April 5, 1879, when the *Kiushiu-Maru* was about 9 miles from Cape Satano, Captain Davison and Mr. McKechnie, chief officer of the vessel, saw, at a distance of, perhaps, half a mile from the ship, a whale suddenly leap right out of the water. As this was an unusual spectacle, they at once fetched glasses, and on the whale again leaping clear of the water, they saw something holding on to its belly. Soon

\* *Graphic*, July 19, 1879.



THE SEA SERPENT SEIZES A WHALE.

after this the whale gave another terrific bound in the air, and, immediately afterwards, a huge thing, about the girth of "a junk's mast," and of a snake-like form, reared itself about 30 ft. out of the sea, and after remaining erect for some ten seconds, descended again into the water, the upper end first, and vanished from sight. Believing the creature to be one of the much-discussed sea serpents, Captain Davison made two sketches of it, which he sent along with an account of the incident, signed by himself and Mr. McKechnie, to the Editor of the *Graphic*.

Several months now passed, and then, for the third time in the same year, another monster, also believed to belong to a similar species, was seen by the officers and crew of H.M.S. *Philomel*.\* The incident took place at 5.30 p.m. on October 14, when H.M.S. *Philomel* was in the Gulf of Suez, about 17 miles from Cape Zafarana; or, to be more exact, in latitude  $28^{\circ} 56' N.$  and longitude  $32^{\circ} 54' E.$

When first seen the creature was about a mile distant, on the port bow of the *Philomel*. Its snout was raised above the water to a height of some 15 ft. Every now and again it kept opening its jaws and sending out columns of water from between them. The spread of its jaws, when stretched open to their full extent, seemed to be about 20 ft. The upper jaw appeared to be black, and the lower one grey round the mouth, but of a bright salmon colour underneath (like the stomach of certain species of lizards), getting more and more red as it approached the throat. The inside of the mouth seemed to be grey, but there were white stripes running parallel to the edges of the

\* *Graphic*, November 29, 1879.



ANOTHER MARINE MONSTER !

*A Sketch in the Gulf of Suez from H.M.S. "Philomet," Oct 14th, 1879*

*[From the Graphica, Nov. 29th, 1879]*





jaw. From time to time the animal sank out of sight and rose again, showing a portion of its back, which was black, and a dovetail fin. It kept turning slowly from side to side, every few seconds dipping its head under the waves and elevating it again above the water. Finally it disappeared.

An account of the incident, together with a sketch of the monster, was sent to the *Graphic* by Mr. W. J. Andrews, assistant paymaster of H.M.S. *Philomel*.

I have omitted to mention that supposed creatures of the sea serpent species were also seen on March 30, 1879,\* in Geographe Bay, Australia, near Lochville and Busselton, by the Rev. H. W. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. C. M'Guire, and Mr. M'Mullan; and on August 15, 1879,\* 100 miles west of Brest in France, by Captain J. F. Cox, of the *Privateer*. Sea serpents, or what were believed to be sea serpents, were seen on five occasions within the space of twelve months. During the 'eighties of the last century monsters of a similar species were stated to have appeared on no less than ten occasions.

On November 12, 1881, one was seen by Mr. C. M. Hansen, his wife and children, and several of their neighbours, near Monillepoint, in the vicinity of Cape Town. On May 28, 1882, by a party of fishermen about 6 miles W.N.W. of the Butt of Lewis. On May 31, 1882, by Mr. Weisz and Mr. Andrew Schultz in or about the same spot. On September 3, 1882, by Mr. W. Barfoot, Mr. F. J. Marlow, Mrs. Marlow and several others, near Orme's Head, North

\* *The Great Sea Serpent*, by A. C. Oudemans, published 1892, p. 498.

Wales. On October 15, 1883, in the Bristol Channel. On August 16, 1885, by some boys between Rodo and Melo Isles, Nordland, Norway. In August (exact date not given) 1886, by two young men near Kingston Point on the Hudson, U.S.A. In August of the same year, on the east coast of the U.S.A. (neither exact date nor locality specified). In the same month, again, of same year, on same coast. In May (exact date again not given), by the Captain of a non-specified ship during her passage from Liverpool to Philadelphia.

During the 'nineties reports of sea serpents were again fairly common, but with the advent of the new century, they became rare. Indeed, I have only been able to find one authentic report, which is as follows :

On December 7, 1905,\* Messrs Meade-Waldo and Nicholl, both Fellows of the Zoological Society, were cruising in the yacht *Valhalla* off the coast of Brazil, and at 10.15 a.m. they saw, about 100 yards from the ship, a big fin projecting some 18 ins. or 2 ft. above the water. It appeared to be about 6 ft. in length. Their curiosity at once aroused, they procured glasses, and with their aid were able to discern a great head, in shape not unlike that of a turtle, attached to a neck, some 7 or 8 feet long, and about the thickness of a man's body. They couldn't see the body with any degree of distinctness, but it gave them the impression of being of vast size and very strange form. It was moving through the water, and soon vanished from their sight. Convinced that what they had seen was something belonging to the order of sea serpents, they at once wrote an

\* Proceedings of Zoological Society for 1906.

account of it, and sent it to the Zoological Society. Their description of the creature tallies to some extent with the description of a sea serpent given many years previously by Captain the Hon. George Hope, of H.M.S. *Fly*. The said Captain writes thus :

“ When on H.M.S. *Fly* in the Gulf of California, the sea being perfectly calm and transparent, I saw a large marine animal, with the head and general figure of an alligator, excepting that the neck was much longer, and that instead of legs the creature had four large flappers, somewhat like those of turtles, the anterior pair being larger than those of the posterior. The creature was distinctly visible, and all its movements could be observed with ease. It appeared to be pursuing its prey at the bottom of the sea. Its movements were somewhat serpentine, and an appearance of annulations, or ring-like divisions of the body, were perfectly perceptible.”

This completes my list of authentic appearances of creatures that were believed to be sea serpents. According, however, to Professor Owen and certain other sceptics of the last century, they were neither sea serpents nor any unclassified denizens of the deep, but either a pair of basking sharks, following closely behind one another, with their dorsal fins and upper lobe of tail showing above the surface of the water ; or a number of porpoises swimming along in Indian file ; or a large mass of floating seaweed, and in support of this last theory the case of the *Brazilian* was quoted.

Captain Herriman, Commander of the British ship *Brazilian*, who was sailing from the Cape of Good

Hope to England, on arriving at about the same latitude and longitude in which Captain M'Quhae reported having encountered a sea serpent, saw what he took to be a huge marine animal, swimming along, with its head out of the water. Determined to fathom the mystery he had a boat lowered, and accompanied by two seamen and Mr. Boyd, a passenger, he at once rowed towards the supposed monster. On getting close to it he raised a harpoon, and was about to hurl it at the creature, when, lo and behold, he suddenly discovered it was no living thing at all, but a long chain of seaweed from a coral reef, drifting along with the current, which together with the swell left by the subsistence of a recent gale imparted a serpent-like motion to the slimy mass. A big root projecting out of the water was the supposed head, the mane being produced by pieces of coral adhering to it. Captain Herriman, on his return to England, sent an account of the incident to the Press, and, directly it was read, opponents of the sea serpent theory at once triumphantly welcomed it as the true explanation of what Captain M'Quhae had seen in 1848.

Professor P. H. Gosse, however, thinks this absurd.\* The thing Captain M'Quhae saw was moving too fast, he says, for such an explanation to hold good; moreover, its head and neck were very distinctly discernible.

The basking sharks theory also meets with summary dismissal at his hands.

"It is not likely," he argues, "that a man of

\* *Romance of Natural History*, by P. H. Gosse, F.R.S., published 1860.





GIANT CALAMARY AFLOAT



Captain M'Quhae's experience would have mistaken objects so familiar to him as seals and sharks for something so very extraordinary as a monstrous sea serpent."

Professor Gosse seems to have taken a very sane and rational view of the question. He saw no reason to discredit the statements made by men of such education and experience of the sea as Captain M'Quhae, Captain the Hon. George Hope, and others I have specified, but (and with this view of his every person of common sense will concur) he thought it quite erroneous to suppose that there was only one species of this marine monster, and that it was the same species that had appeared on every occasion. The sea, he argued, was surely capable of producing not one but many species of leviathan.

Referring to the experience of those on board the *Dædalus* he considered the thing seen might, from the description given of it by Captain M'Quhae and others, have been a huge conger eel or some creature closely allied to the genus *Enaliosauria*,\* its figure and movements suggesting the former, and the shape of its head and figure the latter ; it certainly, he said, seemed to him to resemble these two forms of marine life, far more than it resembled a snake. The *Enaliosauria* theory was, in Gosse's opinion, even more applicable to the creature seen by Captain the Hon. George Hope. Commenting on the experience of this officer, he says :

" Now, unless he was egregiously deceived, he saw an animal which could have been none other than an

\* Marine Lizards.

enaliosaur, a marine reptile of sauroid figure with turtle-like paddles. I do not suppose," he adds, "that the so-called sea serpent is an actual plesiosaurus, but I think it may be an animal bearing as similar a relation to that ancient form of life, as the present iguana does to the long extinct iguanodon." Whereas, however, he goes on to explain, the monstrous iguanodon has degenerated into the small and insignificant iguana, the plesiosaurus\* may have developed into the gigantic sea serpent. "In conclusion," he remarks again, at the end of his chapter on the sea serpent, "I express my confident persuasion that there exists some oceanic animal of immense proportions which has not yet been received into the category of scientific zoology; and my strong opinion is that it possesses close affinities with the Enaliosauria of the lias." †

Mr. E. Newman and Mr. Morris Stirling shared this view.‡ Mr. Newman was the first scientist to absolutely believe in the existence of sea-serpents.

Professor Agassiz, another well-known scientist of those days, also favoured the Enaliosauria theory. Referring to the various descriptions of sea serpents that had come under his notice, he said : §

"If a naturalist had to sketch the outlines of an ichthyosaurus or plesiosaurus from remains we have of them, he would make a drawing very similar to the sea serpent, as it has been described."

\* He points out that the fossils of the plesiosaurus seldom exceed 35 ft.

† P. 358, *Romance of Natural History*.

‡ Report on H.M.S. *Fly* incident by Mr. E. Newman in the *Zoologist*.

§ P. 329, *Mythical Monsters*, by C. Gould, B.A., Member of the Royal Society of Tasmania.

Years later, namely, in 1886, we have Professor Gould,\* who was acquainted with the more recent experiences of Major Senior, Captain Haynes, and others during the 'seventies and 'eighties of the last century, writing :

“ In conclusion, I must strongly express my own conviction, which I hope, after perusal of evidence contained in the foregoing pages, will be shared by my readers, that let the relations of the sea serpent be what they may, let it be serpent, saurian, or fish, or some form intermediate to them ; and even granted that those relations may never be determined, or only at some very distant date ; yet, nevertheless, the evidence must now be removed from the regions of myth, and credited with having a real existence, and that its name includes not only one, but several very distinct gigantic species, allied more or less closely, and constructed to dwell in the depths of the ocean, and which only occasionally exhibit themselves to a fortune favoured, wonder-gazing crew.”

This was Professor Gould's view regarding the much-discussed sea serpents, and, I think, most people to-day will agree with him.

Professor Owen lived in a period when the work of scientific discovery had made nothing like the progress it now has, and when it was thought quite the correct thing to be very sceptical and supercilious. His arguments against the existence of the sea serpent were even then, however, outweighed by his opponents, among whom, in addition to Professors Gosse, Agassiz, Newman and others I have mentioned, was

\* P. 335, *Mythical Monsters*, by C. Gould, B.A., Member of the Royal Society of Tasmania.

Sir Charles Lyell, who went to the United States in order to collect evidence regarding the sea serpent, and came back to England thoroughly satisfied such creatures actually existed.

Indeed, there does not seem to me to be any doubt whatever on that score, since the testimony of so many persons of good repute and experience in travelling by sea as Captain the Hon. George Hope, Captain (afterwards Sir Arthur) de Capell Brooke, Captains Davison, M'Quhae, and others must surely be taken seriously. The sea is so vast that the wonder is not that we have seen a creature arising out of it, that, for want of a more appropriate name, we call the sea serpent, but that we have not, occasionally, seen things coming to the surface that are far more gigantic and appalling.

## XXXVI

### CEPHALOPODA

**S**TORIES of giant cephalopoda, squids, cuttles, and octopus come down to us from all times. Pliny \* speaks of them crawling out of the sea by night at Cartœia, in Grenada, and devouring the salted fish in the depôts on the shore, and Ælian † speaks of one that used to crush huge barrels to pieces in its eagerness to get at their contents. Then, of course, the indefatigable Archdeacon Olaus Magnus, ‡ refers to them, and in none too restricted language, while, several centuries later, Eric Pontoppidan, the younger, Bishop of Bergen, also informs us of their existence.

In a work called *Voyage de l'Uranie* § we read of the remains of a big octopus, half eaten by sharks and birds, being found near the equator.

Even though the remains were more than half gone, they, nevertheless, weighed more than 200 lbs., a proof that the creature must have been of vast dimensions when alive. Professor Steenstrup of

\* *Naturalis Historia*, Lib. IX. Cap. 80.

† Lib. III. Cap. 6.

‡ *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus*.

§ *Zoologie*, Vol. I., part 2, p. 411. It is by Q. A. Gaimard, and was published in 1824.

Copenhagen,\* referring to the writings of Professor Paulsen, describes a calamary cast ashore on the Danish coast. It had a body measuring 21 ft. across, and tentacles 18 ft. long, and a total width of 57 ft.

In 1854 another monster of the same species was found near the Skag in Jutland.† Its beak was 9 ins. in length, and when the whole body was cut up by the fishermen, it filled many large wheelbarrows. More amazing than this, however, was an experience that befell Captain Bourgon and the officers and men of the French despatch steamer *Alecton* on November 30, 1861. The *Alecton* was steaming along between Madeira and Teneriffe, when an enormous calamary was suddenly noticed swimming with extended arms on the surface of the water. Those who saw it estimated that its body, alone, measured 18 ft. in width. Harpoons were at once launched at it, but none of them holding, as its flesh was so soft, a rope with a running noose was slipped over it. On trying to hoist the monster up, however, the rope cut through the flesh, and the hinder part of the creature fell back into the sea, and instantly sank out of sight. The rest of the calamary, including the fins, was successfully hauled on board, and shown later at Teneriffe, to Mr. Berthelot, the French Consul.‡ It was estimated that the whole creature, when stretched out to its full extent, must have measured between 50 and 60 ft.

Quite one of the most extraordinary accounts of a giant cephalopoda, however, is that which appeared

\* *Octopus*, by Henry Lee.

† *British Conchology*, Vol. V. p. 124.

‡ *Octopus*, by H. Lee, p. 109.



in certain of the Indian papers in the summer of 1874.\*

It is as follows :

We had left Colombo (the narrative begins), in the steamer *Strathowen*, had rounded Galle, and were well in the bay, with our course laid for Madras, steering over a calm and tranquil sea. About an hour before sunset, on May 10, we saw, on our star-board beam, and about two miles off, a small schooner lying becalmed. There was nothing in her appearance or position to excite remark, but, as we came up to her, I examined her with my binoculars, and then noticed between us, but nearer her, a long, low swelling, lying on the sea, which, from its colour and shape, I took to be a bank of seaweed. As I watched, the mass, hitherto at rest on the quiet sea, was set in motion. It struck the schooner, which visibly reeled, and then righted. Immediately afterwards the masts swayed sideways, and with my glass I could clearly discern the enormous mass and hull of the steamer coalescing. I can think of no other term. Judging from their exclamations the other gazers must have witnessed the same appearance. Almost immediately after the collision and coalescence, the schooner's masts swayed towards us, lower—lower, till the vessel was on her beam end. She lay there a few seconds and then disappeared, the masts righting as she sank, and the main exhibiting a reversed ensign struggling towards its peak. A cry of horror arose from the lookers on ; and, as if by instinct, our ship's head was at once turned towards the scene, which was now marked by the forms of those battling for life, the sole survivors of the pretty little schooner, which only twenty minutes before floated so bravely on the

\* *News of the World*, July 5, 1874.

smooth sea. As soon as the poor fellows were able to tell their story, they astonished us with the assertion that their vessel had been submerged by a gigantic squid or calamary, the animal which, in smaller form, attracts so much attention in the Brighton Aquarium as the octopus. Each narrator had his version of the story, but in the main all the narrators tallied so remarkably, as to leave no doubt of the fact. As soon as he was at leisure, I prevailed on the skipper to give me his written account of the disaster, and I have now much pleasure in sending you a copy of his narrative.\* The copy runs thus :

“ I was lately the skipper of the schooner *Pearl*,” the writer commences, “ 150 tons, and as tight a little craft as ever sailed the sea, with a crew of six men. We were bound from the Mauritius for Rangoon in ballast to return with padding, and had put into Galle for water. Three days out we fell becalmed in the bay, latitude  $8^{\circ} 50$  min. N., and longitude  $84^{\circ} 5$  min. E. On May 10, about 5 p.m. (8 bells I know had gone) we sighted a two-masted screw steamer on our port quarter, about five or six miles off. Very soon after, as we lay motionless, a great mass rose slowly out of the sea about half a mile off on our starboard side, and remained spread out and stationary. It looked like the back of a huge whale but sloped less, and was of a brownish colour. Even at that distance it seemed much longer than our craft, and it seemed to be basking in the sun.

“ ‘ What’s that ? ’ I sang out to the mate.

“ ‘ Blest if I knows ! Barring its size, colour, and shape, it might be a whale,’ replied Tom Scott.

“ ‘ And it ain’t the sea serpent,’ said one of the

\* This copy, signed by the Captain of the sunk schooner, also appeared in the Indian papers.

crew, 'for he's too round for that crittur.' I went into the cabin for my rifle, and, as I was preparing to fire, Bill Darling, a Newfoundlander, came on deck, and looking at the monster exclaimed, putting up his hand:

" 'Have a care, Master, that 'ere's a squid, and will capsize us if we hurt him.' Smiling at the idea, I let fly and hit him, and with that he shook.

"There was a great ripple all round him, and he began to move.

" 'Out with your axes and knives,' shouted Bill, 'and cut any part of him that comes aboard; look alive and Lord help us.' Not aware of the danger, and never having seen or heard of such a monster, I gave no orders, and it was no use touching the helm or ropes to get out of the way.

"By this time three of the crew, Bill included, had found axes, and all were looking over the ship's side at the advancing monster. We could see now a large oblong mass moving by jerks, just under the surface of the water, and an enormous train following; the oblong body was at least half the size of our vessel in length, and just as thick; the wake or train might have been 100 ft. long. In the time I have taken to write the brute struck us, and the ship quivered under its thud; in another moment monstrous arms like trees seized the vessel, and she reeled over; and in another moment the monster was aboard, squeezed in between the masts. Bill screamed, 'Slash for your lives,' but no slashing was of avail, for the brute holding on by his arms, slipped his vast body overboard, and pulled the vessel down with him on her beam ends. We were thrown into the water at once, and, just as I went over, I caught sight of one of the crew, either Bill or Tom Fielding, squashed up between the masts and one of those awful arms. For a few seconds our ship lay on her beam ends, then filled and

went down. Another of the crew must have been sucked down, for you only picked up five; the rest you know. I can't tell who ran up the ensign."

This epistle was signed "James Floyd, late master of the schooner *Pearl*."

One has, of course, often heard of very big squid pulling under Chinese junks and other quite small craft, indeed, zoologists now, I believe, admit such happenings as well within the realms of possibility, but it is the first time I have ever read what purports to be an authentic account of such a fate actually befalling a British schooner, and this makes the narrative of special interest.

The very next year, to be precise, April 26, 1875, the crew of a curragh\* had an adventure, which fortunately ended very differently,† with a creature of the same species. They were rowing off the north-west of Boffin Island, Connemara, when they noticed, to seaward, what looked like a huge mass of floating seaweed, with a number of gulls hovering round it. They at once rowed to it, but found, to their amazement, that it was not seaweed at all but a gigantic calamary lying perfectly still, with its hideous arms stretched out in all directions. Resting on their oars, they now held a consultation, and, despite the frailty of their craft, finally decided to attack the brute. With this object in view, they very cautiously approached it, and, on getting alongside it, suddenly and swiftly lopped off one of its formidable tentacles. To their surprise and delight the creature did not

\* A boat made like a coracle, with wooden ribs covered with tarred canvas.

† *The Octopus*, by Henry Lee, pp. 110, 111.

attack them—they had fully anticipated it would—but immediately set off in a seaward direction, rushing through the water at a great pace. Without a moment's hesitation the hardy fishermen gave chase, and pulling with all their might eventually caught it up, when it was about five miles from land, in the open Atlantic. They again attacked it, first of all slicing off another of its arms, and then its head. The body at once sank. Taking the two dismembered arms and the head with them, they now returned, and, on landing, reported the incident to Sergeant Thomas O'Connor of the Royal Irish Constabulary. The sergeant, being greatly interested, not only sent an account of the adventure to the *Zoologist*,\* but informed the authorities at the Dublin Museum, with the result that the captured arms and head were soon on exhibition in that institution. The size of the creature may be gauged from the fact that the shorter arm was 8 ft. long and 15 ins. round the base, while the tentacular arm measured at least 30 ft. in length.

The incident created a great amount of interest in British Zoological circles at the time, since calamaries of that size are rarely to be met with off the British coasts. They are, however, by no means uncommon off Newfoundland, the east and west coasts of South America, and in the South China Sea, where they are said to attain their greatest dimensions. I once had a most extraordinary story narrated to me by an American engineer. It was in the 'nineties of the last century, when I was staying at the International Hotel, San Francisco. I met my informant in the

\* Published in that journal June, 1875.



lounge there one evening. We got talking about travelling, and he told me what happened to him once, when in a boat off the Cochin China coast. He had been employed by the owner of a small French trading vessel to repair certain of the machinery aboard, and it was while he was engaged on the job the incident occurred.

The weather was excessively sultry and the sea like glass. Suddenly, while he was working alone in the engine-room, he heard a loud shriek, and on rushing up on deck, to ascertain the cause, he saw, to his horror, an enormous tentacle hovering high in the air over the ship, the tip of it encircling one of the unfortunate Chinese crew, who appeared to be absolutely mad with terror. After remaining stationary for several seconds the tentacle suddenly began to sink back into the sea, taking the man with it.

As soon as my informant had sufficiently recovered from the shock, so terrible a sight produced, he ran to the side of the ship, and saw, close alongside it, a huge brown mass, with what looked like two green, sinister eyes in the middle of it. The mass almost immediately, however, shot away seaward, and speedily disappeared in the distance. Nothing was ever seen again of the Chinaman.

My informant thought the creature must have measured quite 150 ft. across the body, from the extremity of one arm to the extremity of another, but he admitted it was impossible to estimate, with any degree of accuracy, the dimensions of objects below the surface of the water. He told me giant calamaries were sometimes found floating on the water of the Cochin China coast with one



or two arms missing, and that this suggested to the natives of those parts that they had some very powerful enemy deep down in the sea. It was always a matter of the keenest speculation as to what that enemy could be. The idea that it was a sperm whale, as was advocated by certain naturalists, struck the natives as ridiculous, because no whale, however big, would, in their opinion, stand the least chance against so formidable an opponent as a giant squid. Besides, whales and even sharks were not infrequently seen in the clutches of calamaries, that pursued and dragged them down with the greatest ease. The natives were convinced that whatever the thing might be that attacked the squid, it was something very big and peculiarly formidable, and were of the opinion it was some creature of a totally unknown species.

When I was in Oregon, I was told there were several places along the coast where people were warned not to bathe, on account of octopods.

In 1877, an Indian woman, who went bathing in one of these places, in total disregard of the advice of her friends, was suddenly observed to sink. The next day her body was seen from a boat lying on the bottom of the sea in the embrace of a big octopus, that was busily engaged sucking every particle of blood out of her. Some Indian friends of the woman pluckily dived down and having killed the monster with their knives rescued the bloodless remains. The case was reported in the *Weekly Oregonian* of September, 1877.

Octopods are also found off the coast of Flanders, and are thought to be responsible for more than one mysterious disappearance of a bather. An Irish

professional diver, while working there once,\* had a very narrow escape. He was inspecting the sunken wreck of a vessel, when he suddenly felt himself seized in a grip so powerful that he was very nearly paralysed. He managed, however, to signal to his mates above water to draw him up, but great was their amazement and terror on doing so to find he was in the clutches of an octopus, that regarded them with a look of the utmost malice and fury. In their anxiety to save their friend, they caught hold of the creature by the arms and tried to make it let go, but their endeavours proved utterly futile, and they were beginning to despair, when one of their number suddenly resorted to the expediency of striking the brute heavily across the body. It at once winced, and after repeated blows in the same part, it eventually relaxed hold altogether, when they immediately killed it.

Referring again to Newfoundland, the Rev. M. Harvey, Presbyterian Minister of St. John's, Newfoundland, in a letter to Principal Dawson of McGill College, written in the 'seventies of the last century, mentions an incident which happened to three fishermen off the eastern end of Belle Isle, Conception Bay, in 1873.†

The men were plying their trade one day, when they suddenly observed near them a great, shapeless, dark mass of something floating on the surface of the water. Thinking it was the cargo of a ship-wrecked vessel, they rowed up to it, and struck at it with their boat-hook. Then, in a moment, they

\* *Monsters of the Sea*, by J. Gibson, p. 108.

† *The Octopus*, by G. H. Lee, pp. 111, 112, and *Monsters of the Sea*, by J. Gibson, p. 127.

had a rude awakening. The mass, opening out like an enormous umbrella, disclosed a pair of huge green eyes, ablaze with devilish hatred, and a cruel, gleaming, parrot-like beak, that kept opening and shutting, as if longing to get at them and rend their flesh. Before the men could get over the shock of seeing such a creature, it slid out two long arms and seized hold of the boat. One of the men then, fortunately, so far recovered his faculties as to catch hold of an axe, and a few blows sufficed to lop the arms off. Finding itself wounded, the creature darted away, blackening the water as it went with its inky fluid. Fearing to pursue it, the fishermen at once made for the harbour, taking the arms with them. One of the arms they destroyed before Mr. Harvey arrived on the scene, but the other one, which he was able to examine carefully, proved to be 19 ft. in length. The fishermen told him, however, that they had previously cut 6 ft. off it, while about another 10 ft. had been left on the monster. The whole arm, therefore, was probably about 40 ft. in length; and supposing the body of the thing to have been 20 ft., the width of the creature, when fully extended, would have measured not far short of 100 ft.

Some idea of the formidable nature of the creature may be derived from the fact that on the 19 ft. of arm Mr. Harvey saw, there were over a hundred cup-like suckers. Imagine them all engaged at once in sucking the blood out of some hapless human being! And yet such things do not infrequently happen.

An even bigger devil-fish, as the Newfoundlanders call them, was caught in Newfoundland two years later. It had got stranded in shallow water, and, on

the fishermen approaching, it made huge efforts to escape, churning the water into foam and discolouring the surrounding sea with its black fluid. After a desperate battle, the fishermen eventually killed it with their grapnel, and dragged it ashore. It was said to be the biggest ever caught in those waters.

It may, however, have been a mere lilliputian as compared with others that lurk in the great seaweed forests off the same coast. But, as I have said before, one has not to go so far afield as Newfoundland to find giant cephalopoda. Occasionally they visit our own shores, while the smaller species are constantly to be met with in various parts of Europe. At Leghorn, octopods frequently get in holes in the walls of the harbour and form a menace to bathers, who have a very wholesome dread of them, while, not so long ago, a Sardinian captain in the Italian army was killed by one at Jerbet. He had dived off a rock and was swimming about, when something cold and clammy suddenly caught him round the ankle. Realizing at once it was an octopus he shrieked out, but before help could reach him, more arms seized him, and he was dragged below, deep down, to the rocky lair of the hideous monster, which devoured him at leisure.

A summer or two ago, a lady narrowly escaped a similar fate, while bathing on the south coast of France, near Marseilles. She was wading out from the shore to get into deep water, when an octopus suddenly gripped hold of one of her legs and tried to drag her down. Fortunately help was at hand, and a number of other bathers rushing to the spot, the creature was speedily despatched with sticks. It

was small, its arms only measuring about 4 ft. in length, but had it caught her when she was in deep water there is little doubt it would have dragged her under and devoured her.

Octopods of this dimension often visit the north-east coast of England. One was found close to Whitby a few seasons ago, while a dog was once chased by one at Scarborough. It was swimming in the harbour, when the octopus, which was apparently hiding in a hole in the harbour wall, suddenly made a dart at it. Then ensued a desperate chase, which was witnessed by a fisherman, who at once ran to the dog's assistance. He fortunately arrived just in time. The dog had scrambled on to one of the stone steps leading on to the quay, and the octopus was actually following it, spider fashion, on dry land, when the fisherman intervened. Stoop-ing down, he seized the octopus round the body, and was carrying it triumphantly up the steps to his grinning mates, when the creature caught hold of the wall with one of its arms and pulled him down. Luckily, however, he did not fall into the water, and before the octopus could drag him in his friends came to his aid and killed it.

The animal was found to weigh several pounds and to measure 2 ft. across the body.

These instances serve to show how very powerful and ferocious even quite small cephalopods are, and, taking this into consideration, the stories told by ancient Scandinavian writers of Kraken pulling down the biggest ships of these times were not, necessarily, exaggerated, they may have been literally true.



## XXXVII

### GIANT CONGERS, ET CETERA

FEW fish around our shores are more formidable and aggressive than the conger. I have seen congers fully 5 ft. long and weighing sixty or seventy pounds captured off Cornwall and the west coast of Ireland, and I have no doubt whatsoever that they often attain to a greater size. One of the most extraordinary tales of a conger is that narrated by Professor Gould.\* One day, in the 'seventies of the last century, a coast-guardsman, standing on the shore near Wicklow, observed a Major Wolf, who was bathing in the bay, swimming vigorously towards the rocks, and close behind him, obviously straining its utmost to overtake him, a ferocious-looking creature of the eel species. It had a huge bulldog head, and must have measured, so the coast-guard thought, at least 20 ft. Fascinated by the spectacle and paralysed with fear, the coast-guard could neither move nor utter a sound. On came the Major with desperate energy, and on, too, in his rear, with ever-increasing speed, the long, sinuous monster with the cruel jaws.

Over and over again the coast-guard made certain

\* *Mythical Monsters*, by C. Gould, pp. 327, 328.



it was all up with Major Wolf, but the latter always succeeded in keeping just sufficiently ahead to escape the vicious snaps made at him by the monster, and eventually managed to scramble ashore. Directly the creature found itself baulked, it turned round and swam away. Major Wolf subsequently narrated the incident to Professor Gould, adding that a Wicklow farmer called Burbidge told him he had met with an exactly similar adventure in the same spot. Major Wolf said Mr. Burbidge was of the opinion that the creature was a giant conger, and was, in all probability, responsible for some of the bathing fatalities that, from time to time, occurred in the locality.

Anyone who has caught congers can imagine what a formidable creature one of 20 ft. in length would be, since one that is only 4 or 5 ft. is often extremely difficult to kill.

Indeed, I have seen a conger of these dimensions snap furiously at its captors and bite one of them very badly.

I can, therefore, well imagine what would have befallen Major Wolf had the thing the coast-guard saw actually overtaken him. Two or three summers ago a scare was caused at Whitby by the strange death of a visitor.\* While bathing in deep water he was suddenly seen to throw up his hands and disappear.

On his body being subsequently recovered, the teeth marks of a big fish were found on it. Certain of the more prominent of the local people, anxious, no doubt, for the continued prosperity of the town as a seaside resort, and fearful lest it should get the reputation for being unsafe to bathers, tried to make

\* Reported in the local and London Press at the time.

as little of the incident as possible, suggesting that the unfortunate young man, probably, had had a sudden heart attack, and that the marks on him were due to some fish subsequently nibbling at his dead body, as it lay on the sea bottom ; but there were many who thought otherwise. I asked several persons acquainted with the coast what they thought, and they all said they believed the young man was attacked and killed by some big fish. They said such happenings were not unknown off the Yorkshire coast, and that the creature might have been a huge cat-fish or conger, or have belonged to some unclassified species of marine life. Cat-fish, of which there are many known species, do sometimes attain a length of 5 to 6 ft., and, if there is any truth in the stories told of them by fishermen, they are not infrequently very savage. I remember, when a boy, being told a story of a cat-fish by a boatman at Bridlington Quay. He narrated it to me, while we were out fishing in a boat in the bay, waiting for bites.

“ It was away back in the 'seventies,” he began, “ and I was out in the bay just about where we are now, when it happened. I had with me at the time a little boy, his governess, and a beautiful Newfoundland dog belonging to the boy's parents. Now, as a rule,” my informant remarked thoughtfully, “ I like children, but I must say that boy was a regular nuisance. Always in mischief, and it took the governess all her time to prevent him from tumbling overboard. In the end, indeed, he proved one too many for her, and slipping from her grasp, pitched head first over the gunnel into the sea. Before, however, I could get up from my seat to assist him,

the Newfoundland had jumped in after him. Seizing him by the collar, before he sank, the noble animal bore him to the side of the boat, and, in a trice, I lugged him on board. I was about to haul the dog up, too, when a great fish suddenly flashed through the water at him, and snapped one of his hind legs right off. It would have bitten him again, had I not managed to get him on board in time, and it did not go, till I picked up a boat-hook and struck several times at it. It was probably 6 ft. in length, and looked more like a cat-fish than anything else. The poor dog recovered, but, of course, had to spend the rest of its life limping. The governess confided in me afterwards that she would far rather the fish had bitten the boy, and 'pon my word I couldn't help wishing so, too."

Another fish that has the reputation for being very ferocious is what the natives of the South Sea Islands call the rock-cod. This fish, which not infrequently attains the length of 6 or 7 ft., is feared even more than the shark, and many a diver after pearls is said to have been killed by it. But dangerous as it is, there is something even more deadly to divers in the same waters. I allude to the clam, which the natives of the South Sea Islands declare often grows to a gigantic size. It lies at the bottom of the sea with its great shells slightly apart, and should a luckless diver happen to put a hand or a foot in the aperture, the shells at once close on him with a terrible snap, and his doom is sealed. Struggle how he may, he cannot get free, and he or rather his body is held there for just as long as the clam thinks fit. From the South Sea Islands, too, come, from time to time,

strange tales of monstrous crabs. An American missionary, who had spent many months travelling from island to island, told me he had been shown crab shells measuring between 3 to 4 feet across, and that the natives had informed him that, when diving, they occasionally saw enormous crabs, which invariably tried to get hold of them, and it was only by the most prodigious efforts they managed to escape. They said, also, that the only thing the big crab seemed to fear was the calamary, but that the latter was rarely to be met with on a sandy sea bottom, it much preferred seaweed and rocks. I once witnessed a very curious tragedy, whilst fishing from the Mugglestone rocks, near Dalkey, County Wicklow. The water being very calm at the time I could see, from the overhanging rock I was standing on, many feet below the surface. Every now and then a fat rock-fish would swim leisurely along through the azure depths, and occasionally a bream or a small gurnard. I was watching one of the last-named fish digging its nose into a tuft of seaweed growing on a ledge of rock, when the shadow of some approaching object fell across my line of vision, and on glancing to one side to see what it was, I experienced a thrill. It was not a calamary, or serpent, or anything of the very monstrous order, but a fish, probably of from 5 to 6 ft. in length. I did not know exactly what kind of a fish it was, but supposed it might be either a small dog-fish or what is known in certain parts of Ireland and Cornwall as a tub. It made straight for the ledge of rock, where the gurnard, which promptly cleared off, had been sniffing, and was swimming slowly along it, when a curious thing happened. Some-

thing I could not see, as it was hidden under the projecting piece of rock, stretched out a kind of claw and dragged the fish, which struggled furiously, down and out of sight. I mentioned the incident afterwards to the boatman who rowed me to and fro the island, and asked him what the thing with the claw could have been, and his reply was something to this effect: "I don't know, sorr; there's all kind of things in the sea around those Mugglestone rocks we know nothing of." I went to the rocks often after this, but I never saw the thing with the claw again.

Undoubtedly, one of the most mysterious denizens of the deep is the shark. How do they come by that strange instinct which invariably informs them of the approaching death of some one on board a ship? They well know that with the advent of the morning sun a sullen splash will ease the boat of the night's dead, and they are only too ready to supply the living grave. There is something really uncanny about these monsters, something that suggests their close alliance with the most evil of the powers behind the Veil. No sooner does a man become seriously ill, so ill that all hope of his recovery is abandoned, than an elfish light in the sea denotes the advent of the shark.

On it comes, the water in its immediate trail gleaming with a peculiar blue glow, and, silent as any ghost, it steals alongside the vessel, to wait, often many hours, for its hideous meal.

"One cannot look at that face," writes Mr. Gosse,\* "without an involuntary shudder. The

\* *Romance of Natural History*, by P. H. Gosse, p. 221.



long flat head, and the mouth so greatly overhung by the snout, impart a most repulsive expression to the countenance; and then the teeth, those terrible serried fangs, as keen as lancets, and yet cut into fine notches like saws, lying row behind row, six rows deep. See how the front rows start up into erect stiffness as the creature eyes you. . . . Those horrid eyes; it is the eyes that make the shark's countenance what it is—the very embodiment of satanic malignity. Half concealed beneath the bony brow, the little green eye gleams with so peculiar an expression of hatred, such a concentration of fiendish malice, of quiet, calm, settled villainy, that no other countenance that I have ever seen at all resembles.”

Such is Mr. Gosse's description of the shark, and it makes one wonder, as I have suggested before, what kind of a spirit it is that inhabits that truly terrific body, and whether it may not owe its extraordinary instincts, diabolical ferocity, and revolting tastes to some wholly satanical influence on the Other Side.

Another very sinister fish of mysterious habits is the horned ray, better known in various parts of the Mediterranean as the Manta fish or sea-devil.

Though in tropical climes monsters of this species have been caught weighing 12 cwts. and measuring at least 30 ft. across the expanded fins, there is little doubt others of even larger dimensions exist. Indeed, extraordinary tales are told of them by divers after pearls in Eastern waters.

Ray or devil-fish, they say, rival the big rock-cod in power of ferocity, and surpasses the octopus in sheer cunning and devilry. Indeed, they dread the



ray almost more than the clam. Its *modus operandi*, however, is naturally very different. When it sees a diver at work on the sandy bottom of the sea, it at once tries to prevent him coming up again by placing its enormous flat body immediately over his head, and keeping him under till he is drowned.

It is believed then to eat him. I say believed, because I can find no authentic account of a ray ever having been seen, actually, to devour a human body, although the natives are convinced it does so, and they attribute many disappearances of divers to this creature.

A trader in the South Seas, called Webb, once gave me a graphic account of a little incident that happened to him in the 'eighties of the last century. He was in a boat in a bay, one day, watching the divers gathering pearls on the sea bottom, when he suddenly saw the dark shadow of some vast form moving slowly towards the men. At first he thought it was a shark, but, on its approaching nearer, he perceived it was something altogether different. It was far larger than the shark, flat, monstrous, and fan shaped, with what looked like a very big tail. It hovered directly over the divers for some seconds and then slowly sank down, right on the top of them. My informant asked the natives who were in the boat with him what the thing was, and they told him, in horror-stricken tones, a big devil-fish. They said huge ones, far larger than any that had ever been caught, existed deep down in the sea, and that when they once scented a man, there was no escaping from them.

My informant said the great black shape remained

stationary, just above the sea bottom, for several minutes, and then slowly moved away. He at once looked for the divers, but they had disappeared, and as no traces of them were ever found, it was concluded the great devil-fish had eaten them.

PART VIII

SOME OTHER DANGERS OF  
THE DEEP



## XXXVIII

### WHIRLPOOLS

WHO that has read *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, by Edgar Allan Poe, will ever forget his account of a descent into the Maelstrom? Norwegian fishermen are still of the belief that the Maelstrom is a watery abyss penetrating right into the bowels of the earth, and many are the extraordinary tales they tell of it. They declare it is haunted not only by the spirits of the countless people drowned in it, but by spirits that have never inhabited a human body, and they say that whenever these spirits are heard calling anyone by name, that particular individual is bound to perish in the Maelstrom before very long.

John Ramus, a Norwegian, describes the great whirlpool thus:

“Between Lofoden and Moskoe,” he writes,\* “the depth of the water is between 36 and 40 fathoms; but, on the other side, towards Ver, this depth decreases, so as not to afford a convenient passage for a vessel without the risk of splitting on the rocks, which happens, even, in the calmest weather. When it is flood, the stream runs up the

\* *The Sea*, by F. Whympere, Vol. IV. p. 92.

country between Lofoden and Moskoe with boisterous rapidity; but the roar of its impetuous ebb to the sea is scarcely equalled by the loudest and most dreadful cataracts, the noise being heard several leagues off; and the vortices or pits are of such an extent and depth, that if a ship comes within its attraction, it is inevitably absorbed and carried down to the bottom, and there beaten against the rocks; and when the water relaxes the fragments thereof are all thrown up again. But these intervals of tranquillity are only at the turn of the ebb and flood, and in calm weather, and last but a quarter of an hour, the violence gradually returning. When the stream is most boisterous, and its fury heightened by a storm, it is dangerous to come within a Norwegian mile of it.

“Boats, yachts, and ships have been carried away by not guarding against it before they were within its reach.

“It likewise happens frequently,” Ramus adds, “that whales come too near the stream, and are overpowered by its violence, and then it is impossible to describe their howlings \* and bellowings, and then fruitless struggles to disengage themselves. A bear once attempting to swim from Lofoden to Moskoe was caught by the stream and borne down, while he roared terribly, so as to be heard on shore. Large trunks of firs and pine-trees often being absorbed by the current, rise again, broken and torn to such a degree as if bristles grew upon them. This plainly shows the bottom to consist of craggy rocks, among which they are whirled to and fro.”

Kucher and other writers, however, maintain, like the fisherfolk, that the Maelstrom is practically

\* These noises very possibly account for the spirit voices the fisherfolk declare they hear.



unfathomable, going too deep down into the earth ever to be sounded, and they assert that in its innermost recesses are caverns containing priceless treasures and strange monsters of the sea.

Another extraordinary whirlpool about which innumerable weird and thrilling tales are told is that of Corrievreckan off the Hebrides. Though nothing like so large as the Maelstrom, it is believed, locally, to be fathomless and responsible for loss of thousands of ships with their entire crews. That some vessels have actually survived, after being engulfed in it, however, the following account proves.\* In the last week in May, 1864, a steamer on its way to the North of Scotland noticed a sloop, with all sails set, ashore in a small bay at the entrance to the Gulf of Corrievreckan, and, on arriving at Oban, reported the matter to the harbour authorities. As a result, the sloop was immediately claimed by a captain and crew who declared that, when passing down the Sound of Jura, they had suddenly felt themselves being drawn into the Whirlpool of Corrievreckan, and that, to save themselves, they had at once lowered a boat and made for calm water. They said it was only by dint of the very hardest rowing they succeeded in getting away from the whirlpool, into which their ship was speedily drawn. They manifested great astonishment that she could have survived, and their amazement grew when, on reaching her, they found she was whole and practically undamaged.

Boarding her at once, they proceeded on their voyage, and reached their destination without further mishap.

\* *News of the World*, 1864.

## XXXIX

### WATERSPOUTS

**W**ATERSPOUTS are not only very alarming in appearance, but their movements are mysterious, and occasionally they are extremely destructive.

An extraordinary tragedy, in connection with one, occurred in 1864.\* At 7 o'clock on the morning of March 15, 1864, the *Andy Letchemy*, an immigration ship of 150 tons, bound from Vangalle to Paumbem with 120 coolies and 14 crew on board, was in the ferry, between Paumbem and the Coast, when the tindal perceived, about 10 miles to the north-east, an immense waterspout, of a peculiarly sinister appearance. As, however, he was steering due north-west, right away from the thing in fact, he did not feel at all uneasy, and presently went below to his meal. When next he came on deck, he was startled to see the waterspout was much nearer, and that it seemed to be actually pursuing the ship. He at once put the vessel about, but it was all of no avail, whichever way she turned, the waterspout pursued her relentlessly. In the end it overtook her, there was a horrible sound of shrieking, rushing water, the ship was sucked

\* *Lloyd's News*, April 3, 1864.

right into the hideous black whirling column, lifted several feet out of the sea, and then dashed down into the boiling eddying foam.

She disappeared from sight almost immediately, carrying all but seven of those who were on board with her.

The few who escaped being sucked down managed to get hold of pieces of wreckage, to which they clung, till a passing vessel sighted them and picked them up.

This relentless pursuit of the *Andy Letchemy* almost suggests that some living force, in the shape of an evil, vengeful personality, was masquerading in the form of a waterspout, but should such an idea strike any reader as being altogether too fanciful, there is the alternative of some peculiar magnetic attraction, which if not explainable by scientists now, will, probably, be explainable by them in the future.

## XL

### FATAL CAVES

**V**ERY mysterious happenings sometimes take place in caves. In Wales, for instance, there is a cave called Tfywnnon Gwenno, or the Well of Gwenno, which was long believed,\* locally, to contain some queer kind of thing in its innermost recesses, fatal to human beings and animals alike, and for this reason every one gave the cave as wide a berth as possible.

One day, when a number of young people were assembled together, a youth dared anyone of them to venture alone into the cave and bring back from it a handful of seaweed. The challenge was promptly accepted by a girl called Gwennllian or Gwenno, who, seized with a sudden fit of bravado, boastingly declared she was afraid of nothing and would go there alone that very night. Her friends tried to dissuade her, but it was all in vain, and at the hour named she set off alone, armed only with a lantern. She was observed by several people to enter the cave, but she was never seen to leave it, and her fate to this day remains an unsolved mystery. Some thought an evil spirit had got hold of her, and others that the

\* The belief has not entirely died out.

strange monster supposed to inhabit the innermost recesses of the cave had devoured her.

After a while, on wild and stormy nights, strange lights were seen hovering around the spot.

Some said they were spirit lights, due to the disappearance of Gwenno, but a more probable explanation is that they were lights put there by evilly disposed persons, who taking advantage of the terror with which the cave was regarded by the more superstitious of the local folk, used it for such nefarious practices as smuggling and wrecking; and Gwenno having discovered their secret met her death at their hands.

Near Pendine, in Carmarthenshire, there is a cavern called the Green Bridge Cave,\* which also bears a sinister reputation. The tradition is that one day, several centuries ago, an aged fiddler, desirous of solving the numerous mysteries the cave was believed to contain, set out to explore it, though warned not to do so by his friends. As he did not return, a search was made for him, but without avail, and no traces of him were ever found. As in the case of Gwenno, the cave, subsequently, acquired the reputation for being haunted, and people to this day declare that, at certain times and seasons of the year, they hear the sounds of ghostly fiddling proceeding from it.

When I was on the Pacific Coast of the United States I was told a very similar tale of a cave in Oregon. It was on a wild, rocky shore, and people who had the temerity to penetrate far into it were said to disappear for ever. In this instance there was no suggestion of anything supernatural, but the cave

\* *Folk-Lore of West Mid Wales*, by J. C. Davies, published 1911.

was thought to be the lair of an octopus or some other horror of the sea that hid in a pool or crevice in the rocks and pounced on anyone who entered the place alone.

On the same coast there is also said to be a death-trap tilting-stone, similar to one that used to exist in North Wales. The stone, which is flat and slippery, is so poised that if anyone treads on a certain part of it, it at once rises up on end and precipitates them into a cavity of unknown depth beneath it.



## XLI

### THE SARGASSO SEA

**N**O part of the Atlantic has appealed more to the imagination than the great seaweed track between  $20^{\circ}$  and  $30^{\circ}$  North latitude and  $38^{\circ}$  and  $60^{\circ}$  West longitude, known as the Sargasso Sea. Contrary to the popular belief, however, the weed is not continuous, but in patches only, and the area of these patches varies, according to the wind and tides ; neither, apparently, is there any uniformity as regards the thickness of the weed. In some places it is very thin, while in other places it extends very deep down below the surface of the water. A certain proportion of it is, doubtless, brought down by the Gulf Stream from the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, but the whole quantity is so great that one might almost suppose there were vast territories deep down at the bottom of the Atlantic, where it is being constantly generated.

Crawling over the surface of the Sargasso are all kinds of queer and revolting looking insects peculiar to that region, while, here and there, may be seen the decaying hulls of ships, mostly derelicts, that have, from time to time, been borne thither by winds and currents and made prisoners by the weed. Columbus, during his voyage of exploration in 1492, entered the

Sargasso Sea on September 16, and was unable to get free of it till October 14. The sight of innumerable floating islands of greenish yellow weed, following one another in interminable procession, filled him and his superstitious followers with terror, and they were immeasurably relieved, when they at last emerged from the strange region and found themselves once again in the clear, open sea.

Writers would never seem to be weary of writing about the experiences of people who have been imprisoned for awhile in the Sargasso, and the following description by one of them may be regarded as typical :

It was 8 o'clock one evening, we had been drifting all day, when I got out of my bunk and ascended the companion ladder, to take charge of the first night watch. I had noticed a queer smell, like something very rank and rotten, directly I put my head outside my cabin door, and the higher I mounted the worse it grew, until by the time I had reached the deck, it was well-nigh unbearable, and when I looked around, I saw at once what caused it. About half a point away from us to starboard, was something that absolutely staggered me, it was so vast, and queer, and altogether unlike anything I had ever seen before. It was nothing more or less than a great greenish yellow desert, that stretched right away to the horizon, and arising from it, at intervals, in all directions, were the masts and funnels of countless ships, ships of all sizes, brigs, schooners, three-deckers, steamers, a regular hotchpotch of every conceivable build and age, but all absolutely motionless, with no sign of any life whatever on board them. They looked, indeed, so grim and dark and ghostly in the waning daylight, that I

felt properly scared, and quitting my post amidships I joined Jim in the bows.

"Jim," I said to him in a whisper, for the silence was so emphatic I dared not speak loud, "Jim, do you know where we are?"

"Aye," he replied, in equally low and awestruck tones, "the Sargasso. The sailors' cemetery, and, blame me, if it doesn't look like one."

"Are we still moving, do you think?" I asked.

Jim shook his head.

"No," he said, "we don't get any nearer to them hulks, and as there's not a breath of wind, nor stir in the water, we're likely to remain stationary for God knows 'ow long."

"Well, so long as we don't drift any nearer to the weed," I remarked shuddering, "I don't so much mind, but if we once get entangled in it, we may share the fate of those other vessels."

Jim said nothing, but leaning against the starboard bulwark, groaned.

How that evening comes back to me! Away on the horizon the crimson sunset had paled into the most delicate pink and gold, which gradually merged into blue, the deepest and most wonderful blue I had ever seen. But beautiful as it was, it was the horror beneath, that great expanse of rank, rotten, yellow weed that fascinated me most. I simply could not take my eyes from it, but stood there, close beside Jim, watching and watching. And all the while the moon rose higher and higher in the heavens, bathing the silent, reeking mass in its cold, white beams. . . . Then, suddenly, the weeds parted and out of them arose a hideous great tentacle.

"A squid," Jim gasped. "God 'ave mercy on us all!"

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

Though I have done a good deal of ocean travelling, I have never seen the Sargasso, and so cannot say, of course, how far the description of it, by the pen of this very graphic writer, tallies with the truth. I once, however, met a man, who had a very strange experience there. His name was Scot,\* and he was, at the time, on a yachting cruise off the coast of South America. Being curious to see the notorious Sargasso, he sailed quite close to it, and it was when he was passing along its western extremity that he had the aforesaid experience. I will try and narrate the circumstance in his own language.

“The day was stiflingly hot,” he said, “not a breath of wind, not a ripple on the water, which was like glass. I was leaning over the bulwarks, gazing at the vast expanse of yellow, motionless weed before me, when a strange thing happened. Right in front of me, and surrounded on all sides by weed, was a derelict three-master in advanced stage of decay and dissolution. There were patches of green slimy looking stuff on its sides and a quantity of weed hanging to its figurehead and stern. A more dismal looking object it would have been difficult to imagine. It was absolutely motionless, and looked as if it had been there for ages. Suddenly, as I was staring at it, it rose a foot or two right above the surface of the weed, and then, falling down, sank through the weed, out of sight. It was gone in a trice.”

“Well,” I ejaculated to one of the crew who was standing near me, “what could have caused that—a squid?”

“I dunno, sir,” the man replied, “I saw some-

\* I met him in June, 1894, at the International Hotel, San Francisco.

thing rise up with the ship, but what it was I couldn't say ; I've 'eard tell that there be all manner of strange critturs in that green stuff."

Much impressed and not a little awed by what he had seen, my informant gave orders to move away from the Sargasso at once, and the seaweed meadows were soon a mere speck in the distance.

## SUMMARY

THE foregoing pages have proved, I think, that the sea is responsible for many mysterious happenings, and considering its extent and depth, and the vast regions in it, totally unexplored by man, this can hardly be a matter of surprise. What is so amazing is that with the very restricted knowledge one has of it at present, scientists and others, in attempting to explain its mysteries, should be so arbitrary. For example, in endeavouring to account for the disappearance of vessels and crews it is their custom to limit the dangers of ocean travelling to storms, icebergs, derelicts, collisions, and mutinies, just because these happen to be dangers with which we and they are familiar; but there may be other dangers associated with the deep with which no one, at present, is familiar—dangers, indeed, which no one even suspects, and one should bear this in mind, when dealing with some of the cases I have enumerated; as, for instance, the total disappearance of the *President* and the crew of the *Marie Celeste*. Our greatest poet and playwright has said “there are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy,” and, surely, we might add—“and in the sea, too.”

THE END









